
Liberté

*A Reader of French Culture & Society in the
19th Century*



Vol. IV
1865-1905

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Timeline of Selected Events 1836-1869

- 1866 Prussian victories against Saxony, Hanover and Austria.
- 1867 French troops leave Mexico
- 1867 Execution of Maximilian
- 1868 First recorded bicycle race- Parc de St. Cloud, Paris
- 1869 Suez Canal opens
- 1870 Franco-Prussian War (until 1871)
- 1870 THE THIRD REPUBLIC (until 1940)**
- 1870 Adolphe Thiers new ruler of France
- 1870 *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*, by Jules Verne
- 1871 The Paris Commune- 30,000 “communards” executed
- 1871 William I, King of Prussia, proclaimed German Emperor at Versailles
- 1871 Heinrich Schliemann begins work on Troy
- 1872 *Around the World in 80 Days* by Jules Verne
- 1873 Germans evacuate France
- 1873 Napoleon III dies
- 1874 First “Impressionist Exhibition”
- 1876 Heinrich Schliemann excavates Mycenae
- 1876 Alexander Graham Bell invents the telephone
- 1877 “Paris Street, Rainy Day”, by Gustave Calliebotte
- 1878 Paris World Fair- Statue of Liberty.
- 1879 Phylloxera epidemic wipes out grape vines in France
- 1880 Jules Ferry, declares national education: mandatory, free & secular
- 1880 France annexes Tahiti
- 1880 “The Thinker” by Rodin
- 1880 The Pacific War: Chile against Bolivia & Peru
- 1880 *Contes* by Maupassant
- 1881 First Cabaret “Chat Noir”, Paris founded by Rodolphe Salis
- 1881 France declares Tunisia a protectorate.
- 1883 First skyscraper built in Chicago

- 1883 France incorporates Vietnam into its empire
- 1884 France occupies Guinea in Africa
- 1884 Berlin Conference on Africa
- 1885 Victor Hugo dies. Over two million mourn
- 1885 *Germinal* by Emile Zola
- 1886 *Illuminations* by Rimbaud
- 1888 Van Gogh and Gauguin in Arles “Yellow House” Studio of the South”
- 1889 Worlds Fair, Paris. The Eiffel Tower is entrance.
- 1890 Vincent van Gogh commits suicide.
- 1891 Arthur Rimbaud dies
- 1891 Gauguin moves to Tahiti
- 1892 “Rouen Cathedral” series by Monet
- 1884 French Army Captain Alfred Dreyfus arrested on treason charge
- 1895 Studies in Hysteria by Josef Breuer & Sigmund Freud
- 1895 Auguste and Louise Lumière a invent motion picture camera
- 1895 10 short films first shown at Salon Indien du Grand Café in Paris.
- 1896 George Méliès 1st "Cinemagician" screens at Théâtre Robert-Houdin
- 1896 Real spy in Dreyfus affair caught- French army hush it up.
- 1896 5 annual Nobel prizes established
- 1896 Paul Verlaine dies
- 1896 First Modern Olympic games held in Athens
- 1897 The novelist Émile Zola denounces the French General Staff.
- 1897 First Zionist Congress organized by Theodor Herzl
- 1897 H.W. Goodwin invents celluloid film
- 1899 Boer War begins
- 1899 Dreyfus is pardoned
- 1900 Exposition Universelle introduces Art Nouveau
- 1900 First Zeppelin Flight
- 1900 “Boxer Rebellion” in China
- 1900 Arthur Evans’s excavations in Crete discover Minoan Culture

Translators

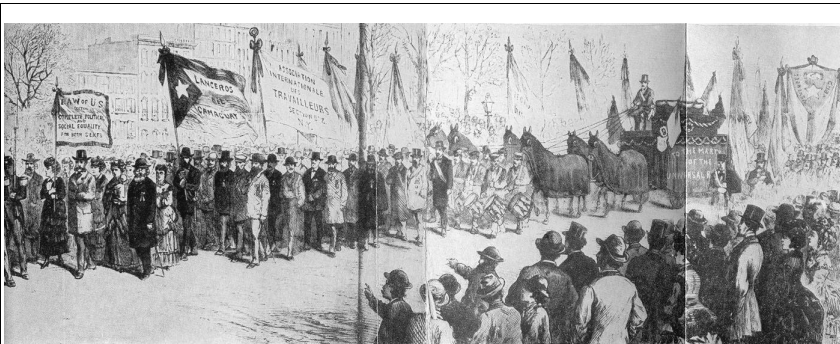
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Translators

Bergen Applegate (Verlaine)
William Aspenwall Bradley (Gourmont)
Carlyne (Zola)
F.M. Atkinson (Thiers)
Henry Glasse (Kropotkin)
W.F. Harvey (Nordau)
Robert Helms (Mirbeau)
John Howard (Huysmans)
Eleanor Marx (Lissagaray)
Jonathan Mayne (Baudelaire)
Stuart Merrill (J. Gautier, Hennequin, Mallarmé,
Mikhaël, & Villiers)
William John Robertson (Déroulède, Mallarmé,
Richepin, & Rollinat)
F.C. de Sumichrast (Gautier)
Benjamin Tucker (Proudhon)

Section 1:

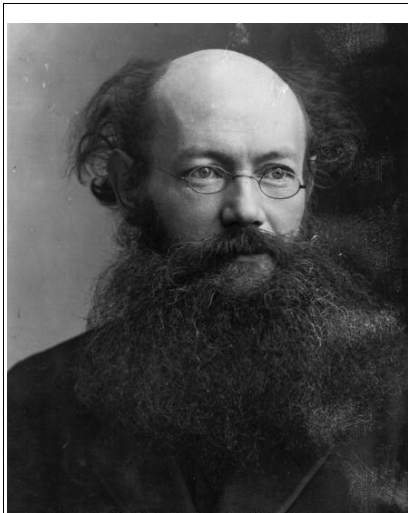
Resurgence of the Left



For many years, Napoleon III prevented any large-scale overt challenge to his rule with his policies of colonial expansion, favouring of business interests, massive infrastructure improvements, and his control of media and public spectacle. But beneath the surface of his Empire, opposition continued to grow as political liberties remained suspended and economic conditions worsened for the urban working class. In the early 1860s he sought to improve the image of his regime, and began a series of changes to inaugurate what came to be known as the 'Liberal Empire': universal suffrage was declared (though the elected officials had no power to legislate), education was partly secularized, workers' right to strike was confirmed by law, and press censorship was lightened. The loosening of political control may have helped to prevent a revolt against his government for many years, but in the meantime the Left made more effective use of their freedoms than Napoleon had intended, and for the first time in over a decade socialists were able to communicate freely about ideas and strategies, and to collaborate openly on major new projects. In this 1872 print, members of the First International march in a demonstration against the execution of workers after a labor riot.

From Piotr Kropotkin, *The Place of Anarchism in*
Socialistic Evolution

In the new atmosphere that emerged during the second half of Napoleon III's reign, a new generation of socialist theorists and activists came to be heard by a large audience for the first time. What these emerging leaders—Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, Mikhail Bakunin, Piotr Kropotkin, and others—had in common was the rejection of the Utopian models of the past, which they considered impractical, idealistic, quasi-religious, fuzzily thought-out. Instead, these new theorists based their analysis of Capitalism on quantitative data, statistical and mathematical computations, and comprehensive re-examinations of history through the lens of economics. In practice, they advocated the seizure of national governments by the Proletariat, or urban working class, who



Piotr Kropotkin built upon the theories of Proudhon, developing a more radical and revolutionary approach. Beginning in the 1870s he became a leading activist all over Europe, splitting with the International Workingmen's Association to become, along with Mikhail Bakunin, one of the primary exponents of Anarchism.

would then determine the transformation of that government into a socialist state. But by the 1870s important differences were also emerging, and would diverge by the century's end into a number of separate, but entangled movements, the most influential of which were Communism and Anarchism.

You all know the characteristics which marked that epoch: there was an expansion of intelligence, a prodigious development of the natural sciences, a pitiless examination of accepted prejudices, the formation of a theory of Nature based on a truly scientific foundation, observation and reasoning. In addition to these there was criticism of the political institutions bequeathed to Humanity by preceding ages, and a movement towards that ideal of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity which has in all times been the ideal of the popular masses. Fettered in its free development by despotism and by the narrow selfishness of the privileged classes, this movement, being at the same time favoured by an explosion of popular indignation, engendered the Great Revolution which had to force its way through the midst of a thousand obstacles both without and within.

The Revolution was vanquished, but its ideas remained. Though at first persecuted and derided, they became the watchword for a whole century of slow evolution. The history of the nineteenth century is summed up in an effort to put in practice the principles elaborated at the end of last century : this is the lot of revolutions: though vanquished they establish the course of the evolution which follows them. In the domain of politics these ideas are abolition of aristocratic privileges, abolition of personal government, and equality

before the law. In the economic order the revolution proclaimed freedom of business transactions; it said " Sell and buy freely. Sell, all of you, your products, if you can produce, and if you do not possess the implements necessary for that purpose but have only your arms to sell, sell them, sell your labour to the highest bidder, the State will not interfere! Compete among yourselves, contractors! No favour shall be shown, the law of natural selection will take upon itself the function of killing off those who do not keep pace with the progress of industry, and will reward those who take the lead.

The above is at least the theory of the Revolution of 1789, and if the State intervenes in the struggle to favour some to the detriment of others, as we have lately seen when the monopolies of mining and railway companies have been under discussion, such action is regarded by the liberal school as a lamentable deviation from the grand principles of the Revolution.

What has been the result? You know only too well, both women and men, idle opulence for a few and uncertainty for the morrow and misery for the greater number; crisis and wars for the conquest of markets, and a lavish expenditure of public money to find openings for industrial speculators. All this is because in proclaiming liberty of contract an essential point was neglected by our fathers. Not but what some of them caught sight of it, the best of them earnestly desired but did not dare to realise it. While liberty of transactions, that is to say a conflict between the members of society, was proclaimed, the contending parties were not equally matched,

and the powerful, armed for the contest by the means inherited from their fathers, have gained the upper hand over the weak.

[. . .]

On the other hand we have seen the poor reduced still more and more to toil for others, and while those who produced on their own account have rapidly disappeared, we find ourselves compelled under an ever increasing pressure to labour more and more to enrich the rich. Attempts have been made to remove these evils. Some have said "Let us give equal instruction to all," and forthwith education has been spread abroad. Better human machines have been turned out, but these educated machines still labour to enrich others. This illustrious scientist, that renowned novelist, despite their education are still beasts of burden to the capitalist. Instruction improves the cattle to be exploited but the exploitation remains. Next, there was great talk about association, but the workers soon learned that they could not get the better of capital by associating their miseries, and those who cherished this illusion most earnestly were compelled to turn to Socialism.

Timid, at the outset, Socialism spoke at first in the name of Christian sentiment and morality: men profoundly imbued with the moral principles of Christianity, principles which it possesses in common with all other religions came forward and said "A Christian has no right to exploit his brethren!" But the ruling classes laughed in their faces with the reply "Teach the people Christian resignation, tell them in the name of Christ that they should offer their left cheek to whosoever smites them on the right, then you will be welcome; as for

the dreams of equality which you find in Christianity, go and meditate on your discoveries in prison."

Later on Socialism spoke in the name of Governmentalism; it said "Since it is the special mission of the State to protect the weak against the strong, it is its duty to aid working men's associations; the State alone can enable working men to fight against capital and to oppose to capitalistic exploitation the free workshop of workers pocketing the entire value of the produce of their labour." To this the Bourgeoisie replied with grapeshot in 1848.

It was not until between twenty to thirty years later, at a time when the popular masses were invited to express their mind in the International Working Men's Association, that Socialism spoke in the name of the people, and formulating itself little by little in the Congresses of the great Association and later on among its successors, arrived at some such conclusion as the following: All accumulated wealth is the product of the labour of all of the present and of all preceding generations. This hall in which we are now assembled derives its value from the fact that it is situated in Paris this magnificent city built by the labours of twenty successive generations. If this same hall were conveyed amid the snows of Siberia its value would be next to nothing. The machinery which you have invented and patented bears within itself the intelligence of five or six generations and is only possessed of value because it forms part of that immense whole that we call the progress of the nineteenth century. If you send your lace-making machine among the natives of New Guinea it will become valueless. We defy any man of genius of

our times to tell us what share his intellect has had in the magnificent deductions of the book, the work of talent which he has produced! Generations have toiled to accumulate facts for him, his ideas have perhaps been suggested to him by a locomotive crossing the plains, as for elegance of design he has grasped it while admiring the Venus of Milo or the work of Murillo, and finally, if his book exercises any influence over us, it does so, thanks to all the circumstances of our civilisation. Everything belongs to all! We defy anyone soever to tell us what share of the general wealth is due to each individual. See the enormous mass of appliances which the nineteenth century has created; behold those millions of iron slaves which we call machines, and which plane and saw, weave and spin for us, separate and combine the raw materials, and work the miracles of our times. No one has the right to monopolise any one of these machines and to say to others "This is mine, if you wish to make use of it you must pay me a tax on each article you produce," any more than the feudal lord of the middle ages had the right to say to the cultivator "This hill and this meadow are mine and you must pay me tribute for every sheaf of barley you bind, and on each haycock you heap up."

[. . .]

Just as the sentiment of the inviolability of the home has developed during the latter half of our century, so also the sentiment of collective right to all that serves for the production of wealth has developed among the masses. It is a fact, and he who, like ourselves, wishes to share the popular life and follow its development, must acknowledge that this affirmation is a faithful summary of the

people's aspirations. The tendency of this closing century is towards Communism, not the monastic or barrack-room Communism formerly advocated, but the free Communism which places the products reaped or manufactured in common at the disposal of all, leaving to each the liberty to consume them as he pleases in his own home.

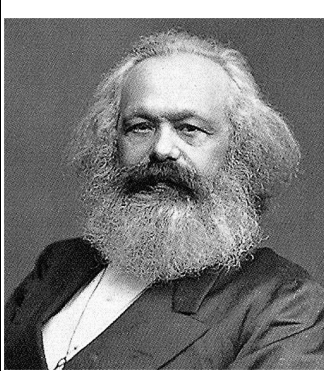
[. . .]

We do not advocate Communism and Anarchy because we imagine men to be better than they really are; if we had angels among us we might be tempted to entrust to them the task of organising us, though doubtless even they would show the cloven foot very soon. But it is just because we take men as they are that we say: "Do not entrust them with the governing of you. This or that despicable minister might have been an excellent man if power had not been given to him. The only way of arriving at harmony of interests is by a society without exploiters and without rulers." It is precisely because men are not angels that we say, "Let us arrange matters so that each man may see his interest bound up with the interests of others, then you will no longer have to fear his evil passions."

-translated by Henry Glass

* * *

from Karl Marx, *Inaugural Address of the First International*
Working Men's Association, 1864



Karl Marx was the leading force in the foundation of the International Workingmen's Association, assuring that his brand of Socialism would become the dominant ideology of the Left for over a century.

Two aspects of socialist theory that became central issues for most activists in the 1860s were Syndicalism (the collaboration of workers in labour unions with the goal of eventually taking control of their own workplaces) and Internationalism (the concept that the Nation-State was an inherently Bourgeois institution, and that workers of different countries had more in common with each other than with the ruling classes of 'their own' countries. Karl Marx and his collaborator Friedrich Engels were well positioned to bring both of these ideas nearer to realization.

Both had been born and educated in the German principalities while industrialization was only beginning there; both had spent years studying first-hand the economic process and conditions of England, the most advanced industrial society in Europe; and both had participated in the Leftist activity in France, the Revolutionary centre of the world, before and after the 1848 Revolution.

Workingmen:

It is a great fact that the misery of the working masses has not diminished from 1848 to 1864, and yet this period is unrivaled for the development of its industry and the growth of its commerce. In 1850 a moderate organ of the British middle class, of more than average information, predicted that if the exports and imports of England were to rise 50 per cent, English pauperism would sink to

zero. Alas! On April 7, 1864, the Chancellor of the Exchequer delighted his parliamentary audience by the statement that the total import and export of England had grown in 1863 "to 443,955,000 pounds! That astonishing sum about three times the trade of the comparatively recent epoch of 1843! "With all that, he was eloquent upon "poverty". "Think," he exclaimed, "of those who are on the border of that region," upon "wages... not increased"; upon "human life... in nine cases out of ten but a struggle of existence! "He did not speak of the people of Ireland, gradually replaced by machinery in the north and by sheepwalks in the south, though even the sheep in that unhappy country are decreasing, it is true, not at so rapid a rate as the men. He did not repeat what then had been just betrayed by the highest representation of the upper ten thousand in a sudden fit of terror. When garrote panic had reached a certain height the House of Lords caused an inquiry to be made into, and a report to be published upon, transportation and penal servitude. Out came the murder in the bulky Blue Book of 1863 and proved it was, by official facts and figures, that the worst of the convicted criminals, the penal serfs of England and Scotland, toiled much less and fared far better than the agricultural laborers of England and Scotland. But this was not all. When, consequent upon the Civil War in America, the operatives of Lancashire and Cheshire were thrown upon the streets, the same House of Lords sent to the manufacturing districts a physician commissioned to investigate into the smallest possible amount of carbon and nitrogen, to be administered in the cheapest and plainest form, which on an average might just suffice to "avert

starvation diseases". Dr. Smith, the medical deputy, ascertained that 28,000 grains of carbon and 1,330 grains of nitrogen were the weekly allowance that would keep an average adult... just over the level of starvation diseases, and he found furthermore that quantity pretty nearly to agree with the scanty nourishment to which the pressure of extreme distress had actually reduced the cotton operatives (1). But now mark! The same learned doctor was later on again deputed by the medical officer of the Privy Council to enquire into the nourishment of the poorer laboring classes. The results of his research are embodied in the "Sixth Report on Public Health", published by order of Parliament in the course of the present year. What did the doctor discover? That the silk weavers, the needlewomen, the kid glovers, the stock weavers, and so forth, received on an average, not even the distress pittance of the cotton operatives, not even the amount of carbon and nitrogen "just sufficient to avert starvation diseases".

[. . .]

We have dwelt so long upon these facts "so astonishing to be almost incredible" because England heads the Europe of commerce and industry. It will be remembered that some months ago one of the refugee sons of Louis Philippe publicly congratulated the English agricultural laborer on the superiority of his lot over that of his less florid comrade on the other side of the Channel. Indeed, with local colors changed, and on a scale somewhat contracted, the English facts reproduce themselves in all the industrious and progressive countries of the Continent. In all of them there has taken place, since

1848, an unheard-of development of industry, and an unheard-of expansion of imports and exports. In all of them, as in England, a minority of the working classes got their real wages somewhat advanced; while in most cases the monetary rise of wages denoted no more a real access of comforts than the inmate of the metropolitan poorhouse or orphan asylum, for instance, was in the least benefited by his first necessities costing £9 15s. 8d. in 1861 against £7 7s. 4d. in 1852. Everywhere the great mass of the working classes were sinking down to a lower depth, at the same rate at least that those above them were rising in the social scale. In all countries of Europe it has now become a truth demonstrable to every unprejudiced mind, and only decried by those whose interest it is to hedge other people in a fool's paradise, that no improvement of machinery, no appliance of science to production, no contrivances of communication, no new colonies, no emigration, no opening of markets, no free trade, not all these things put together, will do away with the miseries of the industrious masses; but that, on the present false base, every fresh development of the productive powers of labor must tend to deepen social contrasts and point social antagonisms. Death of starvation rose almost to the rank of an institution, during this intoxicating epoch of economical progress, in the metropolis of the British empire. That epoch is marked in the annals of the world by the quickened return, the widening compass, and the deadlier effects of the social pest called a commercial and industrial crisis.

After the failure of the Revolution of 1848, all party organizations and party journals of the working classes were, on the Continent,

crushed by the iron hand of force, the most advanced sons of labor fled in despair to the transatlantic republic, and the short-lived dreams of emancipation vanished before an epoch of industrial fever, moral marasm, and political reaction. The defeat of the continental working classes, partly owed to the diplomacy of the English government, acting then as now in fraternal solidarity with the Cabinet of St. Petersburg, soon spread its contagious effects to this side of the Channel. While the rout of their continental brethren unmanned the English working classes, and broke their faith in their own cause, it restored to the landlord and the money lord their somewhat shaken confidence. They insolently withdrew concessions already advertised. The discoveries of new gold lands led to an immense exodus, leaving an irreparable void in the ranks of the British proletariat. Others of its formerly active members were caught by the temporary bribe of greater work and wages, and turned into “political blacks”. All the efforts made at keeping up, of remodeling, the Chartist movement failed signally; the press organs of the working class died one by one of the apathy of the masses, and in point of fact never before seemed the English working class so thoroughly reconciled to a state of political nullity. If, then, there had been no solidarity of action between the British and the continental working classes, there was, at all events, a solidarity of defeat.

[. . .]

But there was in store a still greater victory of the political economy of labor over the political economy of property. We speak of the co-operative movement, especially the co-operative factories

raised by the unassisted efforts of a few bold “hands”. The value of these great social experiments cannot be overrated. By deed instead of by argument, they have shown that production on a large scale, and in accord with the behests of modern science, may be carried on without the existence of a class of masters employing a class of hands; that to bear fruit, the means of labor need not be monopolized as a means of dominion over, and of extortion against, the laboring man himself; and that, like slave labor, like serf labor, hired labor is but a transitory and inferior form, destined to disappear before associated labor plying its toil with a willing hand, a ready mind, and a joyous heart. In England, the seeds of the co-operative system were sown by Robert Owen; the workingmen’s experiments tried on the Continent were, in fact, the practical upshot of the theories, not invented, but loudly proclaimed, in 1848.

At the same time the experience of the period from 1848 to 1864 has proved beyond doubt that, however, excellent in principle and however useful in practice, co-operative labor, if kept within the narrow circle of the casual efforts of private workmen, will never be able to arrest the growth in geometrical progression of monopoly, to free the masses, nor even to perceptibly lighten the burden of their miseries. It is perhaps for this very reason that plausible noblemen, philanthropic middle-class spouters, and even keen political economists have all at once turned nauseously complimentary to the very co-operative labor system they had vainly tried to nip in the bud by deriding it as the utopia of the dreamer, or stigmatizing it as the sacrilege of the socialist. To save the industrious masses, co-operative

labor ought to be developed to national dimensions, and, consequently, to be fostered by national means. Yet the lords of the land and the lords of capital will always use their political privileges for the defense and perpetuation of their economic monopolies. So far from promoting, they will continue to lay every possible impediment in the way of the emancipation of labor. Remember the sneer with which, last session, Lord Palmerston put down the advocated of the Irish Tenants' Right Bill. The House of Commons, cried he, is a house of landed proprietors. To conquer political power has, therefore, become the great duty of the working classes. They seem to have comprehended this, for in England, Germany, Italy, and France, there have taken place simultaneous revivals, and simultaneous efforts are being made at the political organization of the workingmen's party.

One element of success they possess — numbers; but numbers weigh in the balance only if united by combination and led by knowledge. Past experience has shown how disregard of that bond of brotherhood which ought to exist between the workmen of different countries, and incite them to stand firmly by each other in all their struggles for emancipation, will be chastised by the common discomfiture of their incoherent efforts. This thought prompted the workingmen of different countries assembled on September 28, 1864, in public meeting at St. Martin's Hall, to found the International Association.

Another conviction swayed that meeting. If the emancipation of the working classes requires their fraternal concurrence, how are

they to fulfill that great mission with a foreign policy in pursuit of criminal designs, playing upon national prejudices, and squandering in piratical wars the people's blood and treasure? It was not the wisdom of the ruling classes, but the heroic resistance to their criminal folly by the working classes of England, that saved the west of Europe from plunging headlong into an infamous crusade for the perpetuation and propagation of slavery on the other side of the Atlantic. The shameless approval, mock sympathy, or idiotic indifference with which the upper classes of Europe have witnessed the mountain fortress of the Caucasus falling a prey to, and heroic Poland being assassinated by, Russia: the immense and unresisted encroachments of that barbarous power, whose head is in St. Petersburg, and whose hands are in every cabinet of Europe, have taught the working classes the duty to master themselves the mysteries of international politics; to watch the diplomatic acts of their respective governments; to counteract them, if necessary, by all means in their power; when unable to prevent, to combine in simultaneous denunciations, and to vindicate the simple laws or morals and justice, which ought to govern the relations of private individuals, as the rules paramount of the intercourse of nations.

The fight for such a foreign policy forms part of the general struggle for the emancipation of the working classes.

Proletarians of all countries, unite!

* * *

from Joseph Proudhon, *What Is Property?*, 1840



Proudhon favoured a non-confrontational approach to securing working rights, without direct involvement with politics; but many of his followers took a more radical approach.

At the heart of Syndicalism lay the question of Property. Under Capitalism, ownership and labour are by definition separate from each other (the existence of 'capital' can only function as an economic motor when this is the case). The Saint-Simonians, Fourierists, Owenites, and other earlier Socialists had advocated systems where factories and workshops were publicly owned but administered by specially-appointed individuals from a technocratic caste who would run them in the workers best interest. Syndicalism advocated that the buildings, machinery, and tools used in production should belong to the workers themselves; that decisions regarding the production process should be

*decided by the workers according to democratic processes; and that any profits deriving from their labour should return directly to the workers, rather than returning to Capitalists who in turn 'invested' a portion of the profits generated for them back to the workers in the form of set wages. Proudhon believed that this could take place within the existing system, with Capitalists voluntarily selling their assets to workers' unions, and he supported Napoleon III under the impression that the latter would bring this about. But many of Proudhon's followers radicalized his ideas further, merging them with the insurrectionary theories of Blanqui (who has never been translated into English) and the agitation methods advocated by Marx and Engels. The phrases he quotes here are from the Imperial Roman **Digest of Justinian**.*

The history of property among the ancient nations is, then, simply a matter of research and curiosity. It is a rule of jurisprudence that the fact does not substantiate the right. Now, property is no exception to this rule: then the universal recognition of the right of property does not legitimate the right of property. Man is mistaken as to the constitution of society, the nature of right, and the application of justice; just as he was mistaken regarding the cause of meteors and the movement of the heavenly bodies. His old opinions cannot be taken for articles of faith. Of what consequence is it to us that the Indian race was divided into four classes; that, on the banks of the Nile and the Ganges, blood and position formerly determined the distribution of the land; that the Greeks and Romans placed property under the protection of the gods; that they accompanied with religious ceremonies the work of partitioning the land and appraising their goods? The variety of the forms of privilege does not sanction injustice. The faith of Jupiter, the proprietor, proves no more against the equality of citizens, than do the mysteries of Venus, the wanton, against conjugal chastity.

The authority of the human race is of no effect as evidence in favor of the right of property, because this right, resting of necessity upon equality, contradicts its principle; the decision of the religions which have sanctioned it is of no effect, because in all ages the priest has submitted to the prince, and the gods have always spoken as the politicians desired; the social advantages, attributed to property, cannot be cited in its behalf, because they all spring from the principle of equality of possession.

What means, then, this dithyramb upon property?

"The right of property is the most important of human institutions." . . .

Yes; as monarchy is the most glorious.

"The original cause of man's prosperity upon earth."

Because justice was supposed to be its principle.

"Property became the legitimate end of his ambition, the hope of his existence, the shelter of his family; in a word, the corner-stone of the domestic dwelling, of communities, and of the political State."

Possession alone produced all that.

"Eternal principle, — "

Property is eternal, like every negation, —

"Of all social and civil institutions."

For that reason, every institution and every law based on property will perish.

"It is a boon as precious as liberty."

For the rich proprietor.

"In fact, the cause of the cultivation of the habitable earth."

If the cultivator ceased to be a tenant, would the land be worse cared for?

"The guarantee and the morality of labor."

Under the regime of property, labor is not a condition, but a privilege.

"The application of justice."

What is justice without equality of fortunes? A balance with false weights.

"All morality, — "

A famished stomach knows no morality, —

"All public order, — "

Certainly, the preservation of property, —

"Rest on the right of property."

Corner-stone of all which is, stumbling-block of all which ought to be, — such is property.

To sum up and conclude: —

Not only does occupation lead to equality, it *prevents* property. For, since every man, from the fact of his existence, has the right of occupation, and, in order to live, must have material for cultivation on which he may labor; and since, on the other hand, the number of occupants varies continually with the births and deaths, — it follows that the quantity of material which each laborer may claim varies with the number of occupants; consequently, that occupation is always subordinate to population. Finally, that, inasmuch as possession, in right, can never remain fixed, it is impossible, in fact, that it can ever become property. Every occupant is, then, necessarily

a possessor or usufructuary, — a function which excludes proprietorship. Now, this is the right of the usufructuary: he is responsible for the thing entrusted to him; he must use it in conformity with general utility, with a view to its preservation and development; he has no power to transform it, to diminish it, or to change its nature; he cannot so divide the usufruct that another shall perform the labor while he receives the product. In a word, the usufructuary is under the supervision of society, submitted to the condition of labor and the law of equality.

Thus is annihilated the Roman definition of property — *the right of use and abuse* — an immorality born of violence, the most monstrous pretension that the civil laws ever sanctioned. Man receives his usufruct from the hands of society, which alone is the permanent possessor. The individual passes away, society is deathless.

What a profound disgust fills my soul while discussing such simple truths! Do we doubt these things to-day? Will it be necessary to again take arms for their triumph? And can force, in default of reason, alone introduce them into our laws?

All have an equal right of occupancy.

The amount occupied being measured, not by the will, but by the variable conditions of space and number, property cannot exist.

This no code has ever expressed; this no constitution can admit! These are axioms which the civil law and the law of nations deny!

But I hear the exclamations of the partisans of another system: "Labor, labor! that is the basis of property!"

Reader, do not be deceived. This new basis of property is worse than the first, and I shall soon have to ask your pardon for having demonstrated things clearer, and refuted pretensions more unjust, than any which we have yet considered.

* * *

from Wilhelm Eichhoff, *The International Working Men's Association*, 1868

In 1864, Socialists across Europe combined to form the International Working Men's Association, drawing together hundreds of labour unions across the West into a united body that could coordinate both long-term strategy and short-term activism across borders, and combine resources to disseminate socialist ideas and tactics. The International, eventually included between 5 and 8 million members, and became a central force in the economic struggles of Europe. Initially the First International, as it came to be called, included Socialists of all types, but it gradually came to be dominated by the form of Communism promoted by Marx and Engels; the association collapsed after 1872 due to internal disputes between the followers of Marx and those of Proudhon, Bakunin, Kropotkin and others. In 1889 the Second International was founded, as an orthodox Marxist grouping.

Faithful to the programme in which it called on working men to lay the ground for their social emancipation by seizing political power, the General Council did not in the least allow its social

activity prevent it from taking political action in propitious circumstances. The most important steps in this field were the following.

1. Even before the Association was founded some of the members of the General Council had worked among their men for the cause of the North American Union. To the extent to which the government and the ruling classes had favoured the Confederates, making the most of the distress caused in England by the blockade of American harbours as a lever and employing all possible means to instigate demonstrations of English workers in favour of the Secessionists – to that same extent labour leaders had foiled these intrigues, informed the government and people of the United States in their addresses of the true feelings of the masses in Britain, and organised mass demonstrations of London workers in favour of the Union. Lincoln's re-election on November 8, 1864 was an occasion for the General Council to send him an address with its best wishes. At the same time, it called mass meetings in support of the Union. That was why Lincoln, in his message of reply, expressly acknowledged the services of the International Working Men's Association for the good cause.

2. The General Council also convened public meetings from time to time to keep up the English workers' sympathy for Poland and to expose Russia's abuses in Europe.

3. When following the 1866 events in Germany a war between France and Prussia appeared imminent and the government papers in France did their utmost to fan the flames, to fire the national ambitions of the French, and to excite national hatred between

France and Germany, the Paris Central Committee of the International Working Men's Association organised workers' demonstrations all over France against the war party, sent messages of sympathy to German working men and workers' unions, and prevented the French workers from falling, into the trap that had been set for them. Time will show how much the anti-chauvinist attitude of the French labouring classes moulded by this vigorous action helped to prevent a war for which there had then been a suitable pretext.

4. The General Council of the International Working Men's Association took a conspicuous part in the establishment and consolidation of the English Reform League, whose agitation brought about the parliamentary reform of 1867. Members of the General Council are still the most active members of the Executive of the Reform League. The public demonstrations in London that forced the resignation of Mr. Walpole, the Tory, Home Secretary, and the indignation meetings in all the leading cities of the land were, indeed, initiated by them.

* * *

From Engels & Marx, The Communist Manifesto (1848)

Now and then the workers are victorious, but only for a time. The real fruit of their battles lies, not in the immediate result, but in the ever-expanding union of the workers. This union is helped on by the improved means of communication that are created by modern industry and that place the workers of different localities in contact

with one another. It was just this contact that was needed to centralise the numerous local struggles, all of the same character, into one national struggle between classes. But every class struggle is a political struggle. And that union, to attain which the burghers of the Middle Ages, with their miserable highways, required centuries, the modern proletarians, thanks to railways, achieve in a few years.

* * *

from Émile Zola, *Germinal*, 1885

While the overall direction of international Socialist policy was largely decided by its leading theorists and organizers in the International's yearly conferences, much of its most important work occurred on a grass-roots level. The organization encouraged workers to connect their struggles with local authorities and industries with a more comprehensive worldwide mission, and to feel that they had the support of millions of workers in their own disputes. Meanwhile the International's dissemination of Socialist writings made workers feel informed and empowered in a way that earlier Socialist movements had not. Saint-Simon and Fourier had been bourgeois industrialists who philanthropically designed systems for the betterment of the working classes, but had not consulted workers regarding their own ideas; but while many of its leaders were — inevitably, given their education — likewise of middle-class origins, the International promoted democracy and self-initiative as a central part of any socialist society. The result was an explosion of (often self-educated) workers who became propagandists and advocates of the International within their own factories and workplaces, and leaders of their local working-class communities.

For two months Etienne had been carrying on a regular correspondence with the machinest at Lille, whom he had at first

informed of his engagement at Monston and who had subsequently desired that he should form a society from the Monston miners.

"He says that the association goes on very well. It seems that they conquer on all sides."

"What do you think of the idea?" said Easseneur to Jouvarine.

The latter, who was tenderly scratching Pologne's head, emitted a cloud of smoke and said with his calm air:

"Foolishness."

But Etienne grew angry. He wished to form a branch of the International Association of Workmen, that famous "International" which had just been established in London. "Was not this the country for such an effort, where Justice would at last triumph?" In all parts of the world organizations of this kind were being established, to secure the lawful demands of the workmen. What a simple yet grand society; lowest of all the section which represented the commune; above that the federation; then the province which grouped the sections; still higher the nation; and above all humanity, incarnated in a general council where each nation is represented by a corresponding secretary.

In six months they would conquer the world, they would dictate laws to all industries, regulating universal labor.

"Foolishness," repeated Jouvarine. "I've talked that all over. . . . Your Karl Marx is willing that this matter should govern

itself and the only concerted effort should be with reference to increasing the wages of workingmen. I do not believe in your ideas. Burn everything; crush the people; annihilate all; and, when nothing remains of this rotten world, perhaps, from its ruins, a better one will arise."

Etienne commenced laughing. He did not always listen to the words of his comrade. This thing of distinction seemed to him futile. Easseneur, still more practical, and with the knowledge of an experienced man, did not even condescend to become angry.

"Then you're going to attempt to form a branch in Monston, are you?"

That was what Pluchart, who was Secretary of the Federation of the North, desired. He particularly dwelt on the assistance the association would be to the miners, if they were to strike. Etienne thought a great deal of the coming strike; the affair about timbering would end badly; it needed only a very slight act of injustice on the part of the company to arouse all the miners.

"The great trouble is the dues," said Easseneur in a contemplative tone. "Fifty centimes a year for the general funds, and two francs for the section; that does not seem like anything, but I am sure many would refuse to give it."

"So much the more reason why we should have a saving fund," said Etienne. "It's time to think of all this. I'm ready, if the others are."

There was a silence. The oil lamp on the box was smoking. Through the open door, they distinctly heard the sound of a fireman engaged in replenishing the furnace.

"Everything is so dear," replied Madame Rassenenr, who had entered and was listening with a gloomy air, so stately in her eternal black dress. "Would you believe that I have paid twenty-two sous for eggs? This cannot last.

This time the three men were of the same mind. They spoke one after the others in a despairing tone, and complaints fell fast. The workman could not stand this; the revolution only increased his misery; since '89 the owners were rolling in wealth, leaving the miners to feel the pinchings of poverty. If the work- men had been permitted to share in the profits of the last hundred years things would have been different. It was absurd to call them free: yes, free to die of hunger, while they denied themselves nothing. It did not put bread in the cupboard to vote for men who would take their ease without thinking more of their people than of their old boots. This state of things should end. The children ought to be able to see that, if the old people could not, this century "would not end without another revolution, this time of the workmen, a battle which would clean away society from high to low, and rebuild it with more propriety and justice.

"This must end," repeated Madame Easseneur, energetically.

"Yes, yes," cried all three, 'It must end.'"

-translated by Carlyme

Section 2:

The Fall of the Second Empire



Napoleon III, Proclamation of the Emperor Napoleon to the French Nation, July 23, 1870



Napoleon III in full
military regalia

Despite the relative Liberalization introduced into Napoleon III's reign during the 1860's, his popularity continued to slide. His public image had always rested on the legacy of his uncle's military exploits, bolstered by the success of French armies in the colonies and his early victory in the war in northern Italy. In 1870 he made a gambit to restore his prestige by provoking a war with Prussia over the territories of Alsace and Lorraine, which had been constant battlegrounds between France and the German principalities for many centuries.

There are solemn moments in the life of nations when national honour, violently roused, attains to an irresistible force, dominates all other interests and assumes the sole direction of the country's destinies. One of these decisive hours has struck for France.

Prussia, towards whom we testified nothing but the most conciliatory feelings, both during and since the war of 1866, has paid no attention to our good will and forbearance. Launched on the

stream of invasion, she has provoked mistrust everywhere, necessitated excessive armaments, and turned Europe into a camp where uncertainty and fear for the morrow reign supreme.

A recent incident has revealed the instability of international relations and exhibited the whole gravity of the situation. We have entered our protests against the last pretensions of Prussia. They have been evaded and followed by contemptuous acts. Our country was pervaded by a deep sense of irritation, and at once a cry for war echoed from one end of France to the other. There remains nothing for us but to entrust our destiny to the decision of arms.

We war not with Germany, whose independence we esteem. We wish that the nations forming the great German nationality may freely dispose of their destinies. As for ourselves, we demand the establishment of a state of things which shall guarantee our safety and give us an assurance for the future. We desire to gain a lasting peace based on the true interests of nations, and to put an end to this precarious state in which one nation employs its resources to arm against another.

The glorious standard, which we once more unfurl against those who challenge us, is the same which bore throughout Europe the civilizing ideas of our great revolution. It represents the same principles and will inspire the same spirit of freedom.

Frenchmen! I am about to place myself at the head of that valiant army which is animated by love of duty and of country. It

knows what it can do, for it has seen victory accompanying its march in all quarters of the globe.

I take my son with me despite his youth. He knows the duties which his name imposes upon him, and he is proud of sharing the dangers of those who are fighting for their country.

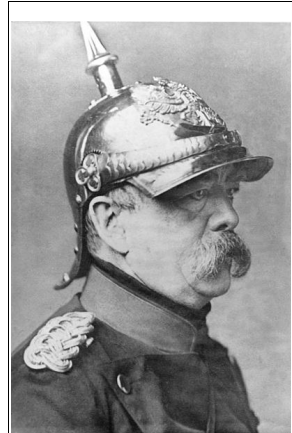
May God speed our efforts! A great people defending a just cause is invincible.

Napoleon.

* * *

from Benno von Tiedemann, *The Siege Operations in the Campaign Against France, 1870-77*

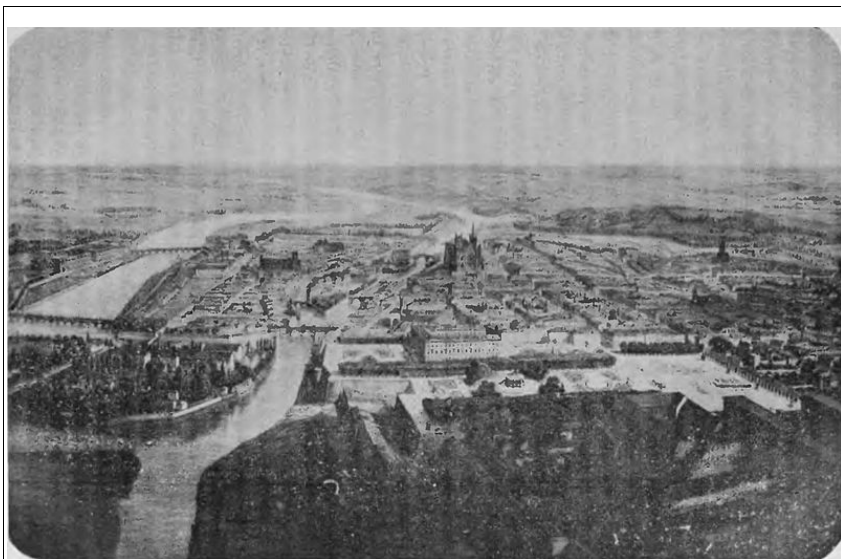
Unfortunately for Louis Napoleon, Prussia had spent the last several decades developing the most modern, best-trained, best-equipped army in the world, under the supervision of the military theorist and politician, Chancellor Otto von Bismark. While many of the Prussians' technological innovations—such as machine-guns, breech-loading rifles and cannon—could be matched by French forces, France lacked the closely-coordinated logistical and communications systems of the Prussians, their brilliant general staff, and the immaculate discipline that resulted from a generation of subjects raised on universal conscription.



Otto von Bismark, architect of the destruction of the Third Empire

Within a month of the declaration of war, one of France's two major armies had been trapped in the city of Metz, surrounded by an impregnable system of Prussian trenches and earth forts. The other main army, led by Napoleon himself, attempted to relieve Metz but was utterly crushed on Sept. 1 by General Helmuth von Moltke at the battle of Sedan. The following day Napoleon III surrendered himself and the entire army to the Prussians: 100,000 prisoners of war. Metz continued hold out, but with little chance of escape, while Moltke's army made its way toward Paris.

Metz was originally a German city. Under the secret influence of the priests, as at Strasburg, it was transferred by treachery into the hands of France, whose King, Henry II, in the year 1552, caused the city and fortress to be occupied by the Constable Montmorency. A fruitless siege was undertaken by the Emperor Charles V, and conducted by the Duke of Alva for a period of sixty-five days, against the fortress, which was even then of great strength.



Metz shown from the air a year before the war.

The place was first formally handed over to France by the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648.

Notwithstanding the great strategical importance of Metz in a war with Germany, and in spite of its important position on the actual theatre of war, the fortress was at the outbreak of the campaign in an unprepared condition. Serious preparations for a siege, as regards both the fortifications and the artillery were first undertaken after the battle of Forbach, and for this purpose nearly 15,000 peasants were summoned from the country to the fortress, who later on were unable to get out again, and consequently had to be subsisted.

Under these circumstances it would not have been absolutely impossible for the Prussians, at the expense, perhaps, of heavy losses, to have established themselves in Fort Bellecroix, after the battle of the 14th August. It is another question whether it would have been possible to hold this position, situated immediately in front of the main work, when the French, after three days' disorder of their closely massed forces, had fallen back upon the fortress, some 160,000 strong, on the night of the 18th-19th August. The consequences of the battles of the 14th, 16th, and 18th of August were not known until after the capitulation of Metz, on the 27th October. In the French army, which had been beaten four times in succession, discipline was relaxed, the power of taking the offensive, always considered a special attribute of the French, was wanting, and the army required, before everything, a thorough reorganization. This was a circumstance that stood us in good stead, and prevented

the French from making use of the advantages offered to them by the strength of the fortress.

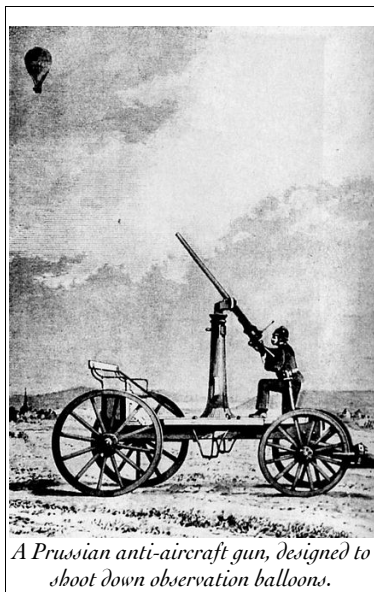
[. . .]

All authorities agree that the fortress was amply provisioned for its own war garrison of 30,000 men for three months, and received further supplies from a number of provision trains, that were originally destined for the French army that marched out to the west of Metz, but after the first battles on the German frontier, were stopped on their road and retained in the fortress. From Paris, particularly at this time, immense convoys arrived for the fortress was intended to form the base of operations for the army on the Rhine. The position of affairs was changed after the battles around Metz, when the fortress was blockaded and all communication with the outside was cut off. The great masses of cavalry enclosed in the blockade, having a strength of some 24,000 horses, must have suffered most. Their evil plight first became apparent in the early part of September. Subsequently, lean horses were driven beyond the outposts, and the slaughter of the better ones began about this time. The rations for the men became scarcer by degrees, and by the end of August engagements of the outposts took place with the object of obtaining all the provisions out of the villages and digging up potatoes in the country round. In Nouilly, three quarters of a mile (3 miles English) eastward from Metz, large stores of provisions intended for the French were discovered by the Prussians. The French, it is true, kept

up for a long time their communication with the country, which ended, when discovered by the Prussians in the destruction of the villages concerned. Thus the Prussians burnt the village of Peltre, and blew up with dynamite a farm there called Le Grange aux Bois because it was evidently useful to the French in their foraging expeditions. The beef was generally reserved for the hospitals. The water for drinking in Metz had to be filtered after the destruction of the conduit near Gorze, in order to render it at all drinkable; but, on the other hand, the wine was not all gone, and there was some left up to the time of the surrender.

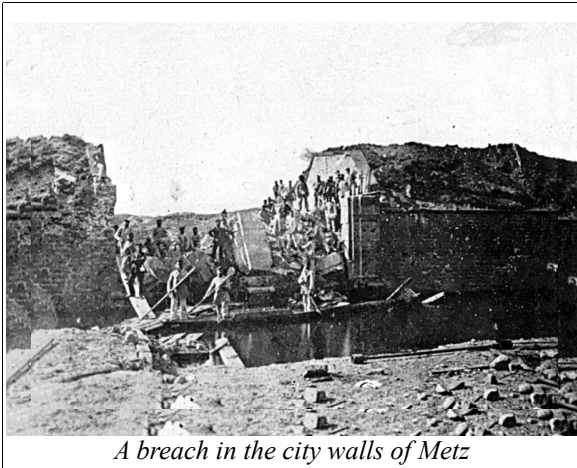
In the second half of September the soldiers received half rations of horseflesh. The want of salt, however, prevented the meat from being pickled in the regular manner, and preserved in this way it did not answer their expectations because they had neglected to slaughter the horses at the right time for this purpose. There was great scarcity of straw for bedding, the supply being barely sufficient

for the sick and wounded.



[. . .]

Marshal Bazaine, after the failure of all his sorties, could not but be aware that further enterprises of the same description would only be attended by similar results. His honour as a soldier was saved, and his duty to his country was done, in detaining 230,000 men before Metz, But if he had succeeded in breaking out — if the Marshal had marched towards Paris, he would but have come between two fires; and as regarded any other objects of his march, without cavalry or horses for transport, with his guns wretchedly



A breach in the city walls of Metz

horsed, with no safe communication to the rear, without the means of supporting his army, he would have been exposed to the most harassing pursuit.

The consideration of these circumstances clears the Marshal of blame, considering the question from a military point of view, and the more so, as although cut off from all communication by either land, water, or telegraph, he had held out in a place, which, having been originally provisioned for 15,000 or 20,000 men for three months had already maintained eight times that number of troops for nine weeks. Whether the Marshal had any ulterior political reason for his conduct, we know just as little as we know the motive of the mysterious journey of General

Bourbaki from Metz to the Empress Eugenie. In no way had the capitulation been of use to M. Gambetta, whose plan was to raise the siege of Paris by armies newly formed in the North and South. This plan was frustrated now that the 1st and 2nd Prussian armies before Metz had become available.

The time for negotiations for a surrender had come, and to delay was to starve. Marshal Bazaine wished to surrender himself and the army, but to keep the fortress for France. On the side of the Prussians, however, this could not be agreed to, because the place, if excluded from the capitulation, was in a condition to hold out for many months. Nothing came, therefore, of the negotiations to this effect, which General Boyer was engaged in from the 13th to the 15th October, at the German headquarters at Versailles.

On the 21st October General Coffnieres, the commandant of the fortress, informed General Bazaine that he had no provisions for the troops quartered outside the fortress.

In consequence of this, desertions were tactically allowed, but the deserters were turned back by the Prussian outposts in great numbers. It was also thought that the Prussians might be compelled to take the army prisoners, by bringing on a battle with this intention. At last they thought to sally out by Gravelotte, on the night of the 24th-25th October, but this plan was not executed.

On the 25th October, General Changarnier entered upon fresh negotiations with Prince Frederick Charles. The terms of the capitulation of Sedan were taken as a basis, and the officers who

chose imprisonment were permitted to carry their arms away with them.

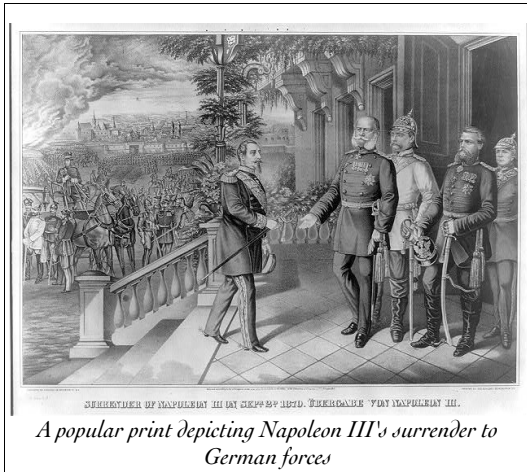
On the morning of the 27th October the fortress fell into our hands, perfectly uninjured, together with its military establishments, with its 3 marshals, 50 generals, 6,000 officers, 173,000 men, 53 eagles, 300,000 stand of arms, 66 mitrailleurs, 541 field guns, 800 garrison guns, the stores of 85 field batteries, and 2,000 military vehicles.

* * *

from Lonsdale Hale, *The People's War in France 1870-71*

On September 4, news of Napoleon III's surrender at Sedan reached Paris. The long-time Republican politicians Léon Gambetta, Jules Favre, with the support of General Louis Trochu, declared the Republic to form the Government of National Defense. Refusing to surrender to the Prussians despite having no major army in the field, they called the people of France to form new armies to converge on Paris, which Bismark promptly placed under siege. The war soon became a guerilla conflict, in which Prussian morale began to weaken; nonetheless, communication was difficult, resources scarce, and the French made little headway in combatting the occupation.

Most persons, if asked to name the latest "People's War" in Europe, would give the war in the Spanish Peninsula in the early years of the last century, for it is not generally known that of the seven months' war between France and Germany in 1870-71, whilst



during the first seven or eight weeks it was a war between only the organised armies of the two countries, during the remaining five months it was a “People's War” for the defence of France. This great campaign is

usually regarded as a single war which commenced with the Declaration of War by France on July 19th, 1870, and terminated with the surrender of Belfort to the Germans on February 16th, 1871. But in this campaign there were these two phases, so different from each other as forms of warfare that virtually they were two distinct wars, the second commencing immediately after the conclusion of the first.

The first, carried on by the organised armies of the two countries, came to a close on September 1st, 1870, with the Battle of Sedan and the surrender of the Emperor Napoleon III and of MacMahon's Army of Chalons; the second, in which the German Army found itself opposed by the French people as well as the French organised Army, began on the 4th of the same month, when the Germans commenced their march on Paris, where, on that day, the Imperial Dynasty was dethroned, and there was established in its

place a Republican Government, which at once assumed the title, "The Government of National Defence."

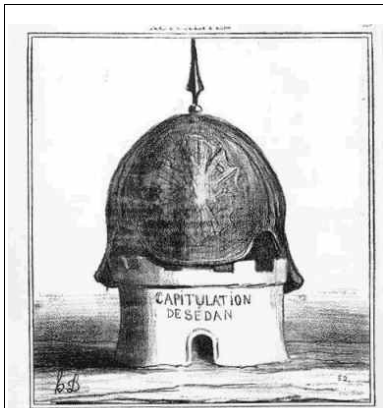
[. . .]

The forces that the Government employed in the national defence were hastily improvised; the organisation of the defence was hastily arranged, and time was wanting for its completion. To these causes, and to the absence of unison of views between the chief civil and military authorities in the provinces, was due the eventual collapse of the national defence; but notwithstanding the disadvantageous conditions under which it was carried on, it brought the invaders to the verge of a catastrophe; and it is impossible to study the struggle without arriving at the conclusion that a country which relies for defence on its organised army alone, and does not avail itself of the defensive power outside the ranks of that army, deliberately deprives itself of auxiliary aid of the very greatest

military value to itself.

[. . .]

The 17th Inf. Division had halted when at five miles from its destination, doubtful, owing to the sound of firing in the south, whether it ought not to move in that direction. Although the marches had been only six or seven miles, the day had been necessarily



The Romanticist satirist Daumier responds to the Emperor's surrender at Sedan, using the Prussian 'pickelhaube' helmet as a symbol.

most trying to the physical endurance and the moral of the troops. Nowhere could they move without coming under fire from an enemy quite invisible to them, and possessing a knowledge of which they were absolutely deficient, a knowledge of the country; roads were found broken or barricaded, and every hamlet, farmhouse and village had to be stormed.

The delays and the crossing of the Divisions had been fatiguing. Many detachments had been on the march since the morning; the halts had afforded no real rest, and when, at night, the troops arrived at the shelter assigned to them, it was as likely as not that the shelter was held by the enemy, who had to be driven from it, or it had been abandoned and was in flames. So the troops had to bivouac in the cold without fires.

Dropping shots were heard till late at night in the neighbouring woods, creating a feeling of insecurity, and compelling the troops to place outposts all round. As to the train columns, they wandered aimlessly about, not knowing where were the troops to which they were earning the needful supplies. So hopelessly entangled had the Detachment become, that until disentangled no further advance was possible; the 19th was ordered as a rest-day for this purpose. Either the Grand Duke or Colonel v. Krenski was a master of the art of converting, by well-chosen language, failure into success, so the Detachment order for the 19th runs as follows:

"In to-day's advance the Detachment encountered hostile resistance everywhere. The advance secured, but chiefly owing to the successful fight of v. Wittich's Division, the attainment of its intended

purpose, namely, obtaining more information as to the strength and position of the enemy. It appears that the hostile troops in front of us belong to the Army of the West (General Fiereck), whose headquarters are at le Mans" [quite wrong]. "His Royal Highness intends to allow the troops to remain to-morrow in their present positions and to give them rest."

* * *

Paul Déroulède, The Marseillaise, 1872



Soldier, politician, and poet Paul Déroulède—here pictured in uniform in 1877—fought against the Prussians both before and after Sedan, then was wounded fighting against the Paris Commune.

Paul Déroulède was a deeply conservative, patriotic poet who served under Napoleon III and was captured at Metz. He escaped, joined the continued French resistance under Gambetta, and fought against the Paris Commune, where he was wounded attacking a barricade. A fervent Imperialist, he was appalled at the restoration of the Republic, and in this poem he laments the French defeat, and indirectly blames it upon the Revolutionary ideals expressed in the Marseillaise. After the war he served as a conservative in the Chamber of Deputies, and in the late 1880's he became a supporter of General Boulanger in his attempt to reinstate dictatorship.

Have pity on yourselves and cease that song;
In silence, when the hour comes, march along
Like vanquished heroes whose undaunted breath
Whispers one word: 'Revenge!' — or haply 'Death!'

Yet hear the accursed story and be stirred:
Or if your ears in bygone days have heard
On many a trembling tongue the twice-told tale
'Tis well; no need drive home the hammered nail!

You love, no doubt you love, our people's hymn?
You love its sacred rage, its transports grim:
And, like proud sons, you feel in its song-fires
The quenchless spirit of your puissant sires.
Its rousing voice recalls our flag unfurled,
Floating to the four corners of the world,
Nations struck dumb and kings that looked askance;
You think of that? Our great and glorious France!
Think of this too, the day of our defeat,
Sedan — a name that with bowed heads you greet —
Frenchmen, remember in that surge of woes,
When conquered France surrendered to her foes,
When in crushed souls our soldiers bore unmanned
The mangled ghost of the poor fatherland,
When ail was lost and leaving the fought field
Our troops, disarmed, were forced at last to yield —
O unforgotten blow! O worst of evil days!
Loud from the Prussian trumpets shrilled the Marseillaise!

Paris Besieged

From Lonsdale Hale, *The People's War in France 1870-71*

The newly formed Government of National Defense was deeply split from the start. It was composed of everyone who had opposed the regime of Napoleon III: Socialists, Moderate Republicans, and Monarchists of both Bourbon and Orleans persuasions. The question of whether the new government would be Republican or Monarchist was delayed until after the immediate emergency passed; but there was no agreement even on whether the war should be continued. While Favre, through the agency of the long-time politician Adolphe Thiers, began surrender negotiations with Bismark, Gambetta escaped Paris in a balloon flying over the Prussian lines to muster a rural army and continue the war.

So complete had been the overthrow of the original organised French Army which took the field at the commencement of the campaign, that when, on September 19th, Paris was invaded by the Germans, the only remaining organised units of the regular army available for operations in France outside the capital were three

three-battalion infantry regiments, a single battalion from each of three infantry regiments, nine regiments of cavalry, and, according to de Freycinet, there was only one battery of artillery complete in material and personnel. Of depot troops there were a large number. Within every battalion there was a depot company, consisting of "the halt, the maimed and the blind," and untrained soldiers. Besides these there were a number of trained soldiers who had not joined the army in the first stages of the war, or who, having taken part in it, had managed to escape being captured. The depot companies had, before the catastrophe of Sedan, been collected into three-battalion regiments denominated Marche Regiments or Regiments de Marche; but in all the new formations it was in the want of good officers that



The Italian revolutionary Guisippe Garibaldi had initially raised a Republican army to fight against Napoleon III's forces. When the latter was captured and France seemed on the path to Republicanism, he switched sides to fight occupying Prussian forces. When the Commune was declared in March, he declared solidarity with the Communards but was unable to get to Paris before its fall.

their deficiencies were most apparent. It was out of these indifferent and insufficient regular troops that the nucleus of the French armies which fought during the "People's War" were formed. The resources of material and men in the provinces were abundant, but the men were not professional soldiers, they were the People; and even when subsequently they wore some distinctive dress or badge, carried some sort of firearm in their hands, and were designated by military appellations, it was as the People that they fought against the invader. And besides all these, a multitude of men, ordinary civilians, and of women as well, took their part in the defense. So the second war was a real "People's War."

* * *

From Théophile Gautier, Paris Under Siege 1870-71

On September 19, the Prussian Army laid siege to Paris, cutting off all food supplies; though the Prussian generals in charge of the operation opposed shelling the city on ethical grounds, they were eventually over-ridden and daily bombings began as well. The hastily-assembled and untrained armies raised in the provinces were all turned back by Prussian forces, and defense of the city was left primarily to the Parisian National Guard, which was soon joined by thousands of additional volunteers from the citizenry. Soon, the entire population was starving—horses were eaten, then dogs and cats, and finally mice, rats, and pigeons. Théophile Gautier was out of the city prior to the siege, but rushed back when it was clear that it would be invaded, saying that if Paris died he wanted to die with it. He described the effects of the siege in a series of newspaper articles which would be gathered together and published posthumously when he did die less than a year later—struggling on his death-bed to complete his unfinished History of Romanticism.

September, 1870.

ON traversing the Place de la Concorde, enlivened by the evolutions and the marching of the troops, one's attention is attracted by the ever-changing group at the foot of the statue that represents Strasburg, which from the top of its pedestal, as it were from the top of an altar, looks down majestically upon the prostrate multitude. A new worship has been instituted; one that will have not a single dissident. The sacred statue is adorned like a Madonna, and never has a devotional figure been covered with more ornaments by the faithful. It is true that these are neither dresses embroidered with pearls nor mantles of gold brocade gemmed with rubies and sapphires, such as are worn by the Toledo Virgin. Instead she has tricolour flags, forming a sort of warlike tunic rayed with streaks of generous blood.

Upon her battlemented crown have been placed garlands of flowers, and the statue almost disappears under the heaped-up bouquets and the patriotic ex-votos. At night, Venetian lanterns are lighted, like unto the small tapers set burning by pious souls in churches before the figures of the Divine Mother, and illumine the impassible and serene figure. Not the least contraction of its proudly beautiful features betrays the fact that the seven swords of pain have been driven into its breast, and when the rosy light of the lanterns flits over its pallid lips it almost seems to smile.



On October 7, 1870 Léon Gambetta flew over the Prussian lines in a balloon named after the revolutionary socialist activist Armand Barbès, to organize continued resistance against the Prussians in the provinces. His departure is portrayed here by Jules Didierand and Jacques Guiaud.

Around it
flutter streamers
bearing patriotic
inscriptions, and on
the pedestal are
inscribed
expressions of love
and admiration.
Verses and stanzas
are penciled, and
while art is not

always visible in these effusions, feeling is never absent from them. At the foot of the pedestal stands wide open a large register, upon which signature follows signature. The people of Paris are putting their names down as callers upon the City of Strasburg. The volume, which is to be splendidly bound and blazoned with the arms of the glorious city, is to be presented to the great martyr that has offered itself up for the honour and salvation of France, and no city will ever have held in its archives a more glorious Golden Book.

By one of those exquisitely gracious impulses that at times thrill the masses, the people of Paris seem, by their adoption of this statue as a sacred image, as a sort of Palladium, and by worshipping it constantly, to seek to compensate the unfortunate city by giving it a proof of ardent sympathy, and to back it up to the best of their ability in its heroic resistance.

[. . .]

Soon the animals noticed that men looked at them in a strange fashion, and that under pretext of caressing them, they felt them with their hands, with a butcher's touch, to make sure of their more or less good condition. They had turned into a prey for man, into game that was hotly tracked. The cats, cleverer and more distrustful than dogs, were the first to understand this, and exhibited great prudence in their dealings with humanity. It was only with tried friends of the feline race that they ventured to purr and to take their usual place upon their knee, but at the least abrupt gesture, they bolted to roofs and inaccessible cellars. The dogs, having at last seen the change, fled like hares when they were called, though nooses, bags, and clubs managed none-the-less to secure many a victim. Shops for the sale of dog and cat flesh, as well as of rats, boldly set up their signs, making no attempt to deceive their customers with regard to the kind of meat they dealt in. They were crowded with purchasers.

[. . .]

After the dogs and the cats the birds' turn came. The ornithology of Paris is not very varied; it comprises little else than sparrows, and, in the old gardens of the quieter districts, a few thrushes, and nightingales. The sparrows, winged street Arabs, regular gutter Gavroches, are beloved of the Parisians and enjoy in the city an immunity comparable to the privileges of the pigeons of Saint Mark's. Seed is not scattered for them at regular hours, it is true, nor do they have an income of their own, like the Venetian birds, but they are allowed to pick shamelessly everywhere, and the

bird-charmers in the gardens of the Tuileries throw bread crumbs to them; they go and come, chatter and flutter about, move only when you are on the point of stepping on them, and their twittering fills the atmosphere with gaiety. Until now their innocent lives have been respected of all men, nor, indeed, are they very fat under their feathery covering, these careless little Bohemians burned up with ardour and cleverness. But hunger made them as valuable as larks or ortolans.

People had begun to hunt them, and for a time, accustomed as the birds were to the sound of musketry and heavy guns, they could not bring themselves to believe that this new fusilade was directed against them, believing themselves unworthy of so great an expenditure of powder and shot. They were shot at with pea-shooters, limed twigs and snares were set for them, and they perforce had to believe their own eyes and recognise the fact that the old pact of friendship was broken and that in Paris they were reckoned as game.

[. . .]

In the Rue Royale, incendiarism had continued the work done by the shells and cannon-balls. Houses ripped up showed their interiors just like corpses cut open. The flooring from every story had crashed down on top of the cellar arches; charred beams, twisted bars of iron, stairs leading into the void, like the fanciful stairs in Piranesi's architectural visions, avalanches of building stone or bricks, great pieces of walls on which the arrangement of the rooms could still be seen, with the paper on the walls, the mantelpieces, and

a bit of furniture spared by the flames — such was the sight that painfully shocked the beholder. But for the huge staying-timbers, the calcined debris would have fallen prone into the street, crushing to death both passers-by and sight-seers; human activity, however, had already set to work and was clearing away the rubbish, tearing down tottering walls, staying up those that might be utilised; and these were not frequent, alas! It would not be so bad if the loss were merely one of materials, but under the debris lie buried many corpses.

[. . .]

To wander about ruins is as interesting as to read a novel by

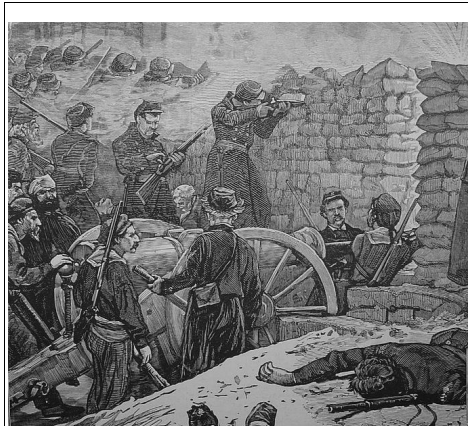
Ann Radcliffe, and so I went along passages strewn with rubbish, looked eagerly into rooms that had lost their doors, into chambers the wainscoting of which had been torn off or reduced to ashes. Council halls on the walls of which were still faintly discernible traces of paintings. In the midst of such chaos one tries to put everything back in its place, to restore the



appearance of the building, and to recall the ghosts of days gone by. Imagination evokes what has been but recently destroyed, and delights in the task. Then there is some peril in such a visit. The void between one landing and another must be crossed on a bending plank; heaps of rubbish that give way when stepped on have to be climbed; stairs, their railings gone and their steps missing or disjointed like the steps of the Propylaea, have to be ascended, an arch that threatens to fall has to be traversed, and as one clutches at the calcined stones they crumble into powder at the touch.

[. . .]

So to the pietists and mummers, to the hypocrites of philosophy and politics, to the idiots of every sect, to the would-be Juvenals, to the workers over of wornout commonplaces should be left the making of those stale charges in which Paris is compared to the great



French soldiers and National Guardsmen in the Parisian trenches

scarlet woman of Babylon, riding on the beast of the Apocalypse, and such other biblical amenities. That sort of thing smacks of the cad, and is bad form. The city which Henry IV already called "the great city" deserves better treatment; insults of that nature are base ingratitude. Paris, said to be so deeply gangrened by the rottenness of decadence, so enervated by luxury and debauch, so incapable of

doing without its comforts, has shown itself heroic without bombast, and alone did not despair of the France that seeks to repudiate it today. The city supposed to be so corrupt proved its grandeur, its simplicity, its courage, its sublimity for five long months. It exhibited virtues no one expected of it; inflexible constancy, obstinate resignation, patience in bearing obscure suffering, cold, hunger, sickness, long watches in wind, snow, and rain, its feet in icy mud, at



A building bombed out by Prussian artillery in Paris, photographed by Adolphe Braun

the door of bakers that sold sawdust for flour, and butchers that dealt in putrid flesh. Shut up within its tower, like Ugolino, it refused to surrender and affirmed it had dined well. Epicurean Paris put up with rat-pie and swore it had never tasted anything so

good; it laughed at Prussia's Hegelian shells, although they were fired at the true psychological moment, and went to sleep careless of the projectiles that, falling on its bed through a hole in the roof, might make it pass from sleep unto death. The heart of France beat in the breast of starving Paris; it was the sceptic whose faith proved the most robust, and who awaited with firm faith, and at the expense of his own life, a miracle which the provinces did not work.

* * *

from Adolphe Thiers, *Memoirs* (c.1903)

On Jan. 28, 1871 the Government of National Defense agreed to an armistice to discuss surrender terms. Adolphe Thiers—a long time Liberal monarchist who had overseen the violent suppression of the 1834 Parisian uprising—conducted the initial negotiations on behalf of the government. When elections were held the following month, the result was a Monarchist majority as had been the case in 1848, with Thiers as its head; the decision as to whether the new government would be Monarchist or Republican was still deferred.

November 3rd. — At two o'clock I was at the Chancellor's. I found him irritable, not so calm as the day before.

"I have just been discussing the question of the armistice with the King and the Staff," he said. "There will be many difficulties still to solve. As for the elections in Alsace and Lorraine, what we agreed upon yesterday is accepted. You will have permission yourselves to choose in these provinces leading men to complete your Assembly. On the other points, have you prepared a formal document?"

"Here it is," I replied, "in the form of questions, followed by the indicated answers. With these elementary details to go on we can very speedily draw up an agreement ready to be signed by both of us."

He read the preamble.

"Bases of an agreement to put an end to loss of life, in conformance with the desire of the neutral Powers. . . ."

At these words, "the neutral Powers," Count Bismarck looked at me with an air that declared that these Powers did not exist as far as he was concerned. I said:

"I will delete the words, but the neutral Powers will none the less exist, and will not cease to count in Europe."

The Chancellor continued:

"Article 1. — Cessation of hostilities. Convocation of an Assembly."

No comment, except that a date is to be fixed for the elections so as not to waste the time of the armistice uselessly.

"Article 2. — Duration of the armistice: twenty-eight days."

"It was to be twenty-five," said the Chancellor; "this is an inconvenience: it increases the quantity of provisions to be brought into Paris. We shall see."

"Article 3. — The choice of place where the Assembly is to meet."

"As we have already agreed," remarked Count Bismarck, "it must not meet in Paris. Let us continue."

[. . .]

"Articles 6 and 7. — Revictualling of Paris."

Upon this head, serious difficulty.

"You ask too much of us," said Count Bismarck. "If we granted you what you ask you would last out two months longer, and

we should be forced to remain here for the winter, for we do not wish to destroy Paris. We wish to wait for the exhaustion of your stores. Accordingly, this article is to be modified. If you were willing to surrender a fort I would let you have provisions, but you would still say I am demanding Mont-Valrien!"

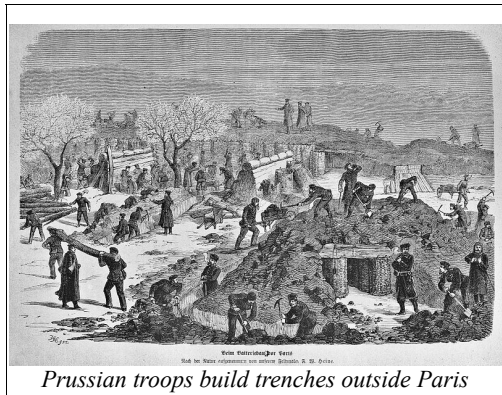
"No," I replied; "provisions and no fort, o no armistice."

Without insisting further Count Bismarck comes to the last article, relating to the third party as arbiter.

He will not consent that a third party should be chosen from among the neutrals.

[. . .]

The Prussian prefect of Versailles had on the 31st of October



Prussian troops build trenches outside Paris

directed the President of the Civil Tribunal to administer justice in the name of Napoleon III. I pointed out to Count Bismarck that this showed an inconsistency, since, at the very moment, he was treating with a representative of the French Republic. When he replied that he had not recognized this Government, I asked him if he had not given up the thought of coming to terms with the Bonapartes. He then said expressly that he found the Cassel intrigues ridiculous and trivial, and that if he had to choose a party, outside Prussia, he would be with the Bourbons.

Taking advantage of this tone of confidence and cordiality he was adopting towards me, I questioned him as to the terms of the capitulation of Metz. He showed it to me and translated it. It dealt only with military matters and only arranged the fate of the army. Then he came back to talk of his preference for the Bourbons.

[. . .]

"What are the Orleans princes doing? If you have any message to send them, I am at your service."

"I thank you, Count, and I would not hesitate to trust you, if there was any reason. I look upon the Orleans princes with respect and affection, but I think they would be wrong to do anything imprudent, and to be willing at this juncture to behave as claimants to the throne. My conduct, solely inspired by the interests of France, has always been loyal. It will be the same towards the Republic. I have told its heads that if they gave us a wise and well-ordered Government we should accept it; that otherwise we should return to our preferences. We shall be faithful to this promise. Today the Republic allows Legitimist, Republican, and Orleanist to fight side by side in defense of their country; let us take advantage of this. Later we shall see. There are certain symptoms which indeed make one apprehensive lest the Republic of 1870 may follow the example of the Republic of 1848. In that case the return of the Orleans princes might be useful to France. But today I have nothing to send to them, and I thank you for your confidence."

* * *

Section 3:

The Paris Commune:

A Dialogue



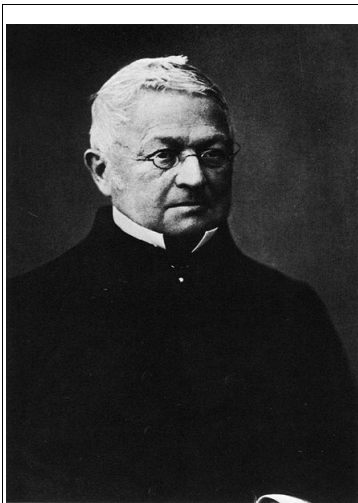
In March, 1871 Paris declared itself an independent commune in the power of the working class. For three months the city functioned as socialist direct Democracy, while under siege by over 150,000 government troops. When the Commune fell, the result was the largest single massacre in the history of France.

The Paris Commune: A Dialogue

History is never neutral; and history which appears neutral is often the most biased of all. But the events surrounding the Paris Commune are especially difficult to reconstruct and evaluate. This difficulty has several sources: the highly charged nature of the ideologies informing it, the vigorous propaganda campaigns on both sides, the many closed meetings of the Versailles government (including those with representatives of the other European powers) and the destruction of many of the Commune's administrative records. But most responsible for the near-insurmountable difficulty of reconstructing a unified narrative is confused nature of many of the events, and the diffused nature of power within the commune, where most decisions were taken on the neighborhood level as opposed to the highly centralized administration of statist governments, which better lend themselves to synthesizing a simple 'master narrative'. For this reason, the trajectory of the Commune will be examined through a back-and-forth dialogue constructed between Prosper Lissagaray, a socialist writer and activist heavily involved with the Commune, and Adolphe Thiers, president of the official French national government that had taken the place of the Third Empire.

from Adolphe Thiers, *Memoirs*, c. 1903

When news of Socialist agitation in Paris reached the negotiations between Thiers, and Bismark, the erstwhile enemies set aside their differences to unite against Paris. While his proclamations against the Commune stringently denied the Communard charge that he intended to reinstate a Monarchy, he affirms here that he had in fact hoped to re-establish Monarchy if the political situation had come to allow it.



Adolphe Thiers, provisional president of the Government of National Defense, photographed by Nadar

Next day precisely at noon I was at the Chancellor [Bismark]'s house. He seemed preoccupied, and began by asking if I had news from Paris. When I answered in the negative, he then told me the Commune had been proclaimed, and that MM. Dorian, Delescluze, Felix Pyat, and perhaps Blanqui, made up the new Government.

My distress at this news was very great. I had many times uneasily

asked myself what had been the result of the disturbance that had manifested itself at the moment of my leaving Paris. Count Bismarck read me his information; it agreed with my fears sufficiently to justify them all. I wished, however, to have more certain news; and accordingly I proposed to the Count to send one of my secretaries to the outposts at the bridge of Sevres, to discover what had occurred. He welcomed the idea, and I dispatched

M. Cochery immediately.

"If the revolution is a fact," said he, "the negotiations will ipso facto be broken off. If not, we shall take up our task again; there must be some truth in all this, and that will be enough to lessen greatly the political value of the point we are discussing. Let us put it aside until we are better informed. Your envoy will be back in the evening. You will let me know what he has heard, and we shall act accordingly."

[. . .]

At the moment when I accepted the burden of power, at Bordeaux, I was far from thinking that we ought to renounce all hope of one day re-establishing Monarchy in France; but such an enterprise seemed to me doomed to certain failure if it were attempted in the position in which we then found ourselves. The three sovereigns who had followed one another — Charles X, Louis Philippe, Napoleon III (especially this last, not having been willing to accept the strictly constitutional system of England) — had alienated independent minds and shaken the royal power.

from Prosper Lissagaray, *History of the Paris Commune, 1876*

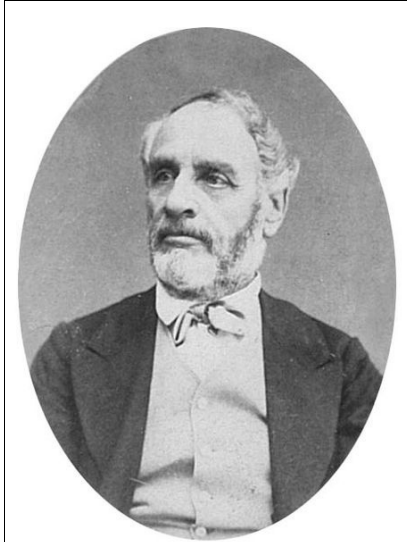
A complex combination of events combined to bring about the declaration of the Commune, none of them over-riding in themselves. These included the willingness of the 'Government of National Defense' to surrender Paris to the Prussians while its citizens insisted on continuing their defense; the disbanding of the National Guard, which left Paris without a militia with which to defend itself against foreign invasion (such as the Prussian Army still encircling the city ready to resume the siege should the armistice fail) or against the regular French army in a Revolutionary situation; the very large number of Monarchists and Imperialists appointed to important government positions; the very large number of military officers raised or retained in high rank despite their well-known responsibility for former war-crimes and massacres, including the violent suppression of the workers' uprisings in the 'Days of June' and Napoleon III's coup d'etat (see Vol. 5); and the announcement that Paris—with its history of political radicalism—would be abandoned as the nation's capital in favour of Versailles, with its Monarchical legacy. As discontent continued to rise, the National Guard elected a Central Committee to co-ordinate their response should they indeed be declared disbanded; many of those elected were neighborhood leaders with socialist leanings, especially from working-class areas.

To the rural plebiscite the Parisian National Guard had answered by their federation; to the threats of the monarchists, to the projects of decapitalization, by the demonstration of the Bastille; to D'Aurelles' appointment, by the resolutions of the 3rd March. What the perils of the siege had not been able to effect the Assembly had brought about — the union of the middle class with the proletariat. The immense majority of Paris looked upon the growing army of the

Republic without regret. On the 3rd the Minister of the Interior, Picard, having denounced 'the anonymous Central Committee,' and called upon 'all good citizens to stifle these culpable demonstrations,' no one stirred.

[...]

The leaders of the coalition saw clearly which way events were drifting. The republican army each day increased its arsenal of muskets, and especially of cannon. There were now pieces of ordnance at ten different places — at the Barrière d'Italie, at the Faubourg St. Antoine, at the Buttes Montmartre. Red posters informed Paris of the formation of the Central Committee of the federation of the National Guards, and invited citizens to organize in each arrondissement



Charles Delescluze, exiled under Napoleon III, briefly served as a Deputy after his fall. During the lead-up to the Commune, he demanded the impeachment of Thiers and his administration, then resigned and was elected to the Communal Council. He was killed on the barricades when the Commune fell.

committees of battalions and councils of legions, and to appoint the delegates to the Central Committee. The ensemble, the ardour of the movement seemed to bear witness to the powerful organization of the Central Committee. A few days more and the answer of the people would be complete if a blow were not struck at once.

[. . .]

The Right never ceased baiting the bull. Sneers, provocations, insults, were showered upon Paris and her representatives. Some among them, Rochefort, Tridon, Malon, and Ranc, when withdrawing after the vote mutilating the country, were followed by cries of 'Pleasant journey to you.' Victor Hugo defending Garibaldi was hooted. Delescluze demanding the impeachment of the members of the National Defence was no better listened to. Jules Simon declared that he would maintain the law against association. On the 10th the breach was opened. A resolution was passed that Paris should no longer be the capital, and that the Assembly should sit at Versailles.

On the 11th, the day on which Paris learnt of her decapitation and the ruinous decrees, Vinoy suppressed six Republican journals, four of which, *Le Cri du Peuple*, *Le Mot d'Ordre*, *Le Père Duchêne*, and *Le Vengeur*; had a circulation of 200,000. The same day the court-martial which judged the accused of the 31st October condemned several to death, among others Flourens and Blanqui. Thus everybody was hit — bourgeois, republicans, revolutionaries. This Assembly of Bordeaux, the deadly foe of Paris, a stranger to her in sentiment, mind, and language, seemed a Government of foreigners. The commercial quarters as well as the faubourgs rang with a general outcry against it.

* * *

from Adolphe Thiers, *Memoirs*

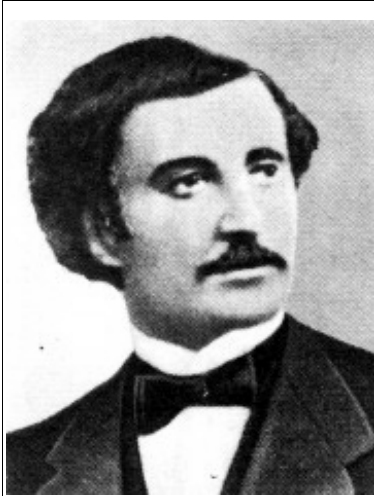
I had left Paris in an alarming state.

M. Jules Favre wrote to me immediately after my departure, saying that if I did not bring back the Government to the city he would resign, and all his colleagues with him ; for the revolutionary party in Paris was becoming more and more difficult to control, and pretended that we were staying in Bordeaux so as to proclaim a monarchy there. It was daily becoming more difficult to exercise the power of the State from so far off, and a prompt decision on the point was essential.

It was on this occasion that differences of opinion began to display themselves among the various parties in the Assembly. The Right, troubled over the disquieting state of Paris, would have wished not to leave Bordeaux, where they also hoped to have greater freedom to follow their real inclinations. At the very most they consented to go as far as Orleans. The Left, inspired by the opposite motives, would gladly have gone to Paris.

By way of compromise, I thought for a moment of proposing Fontainebleau as a temporary seat for the Assembly; but reasons relating to military order changed my intention, and fortunately so. I saw that if Paris should rise, as we could not but fear, the troops detached to guard the Assembly would be missing from the army that would march to quell the insurrection. This consideration led me to prefer Versailles to Fontainebleau, as it was only four leagues from the capital, and dominated it completely by means of Mont-Valerien.

from Lissagaray, *History of the Paris Commune*, 1876



Prosper Lissagaray

Prosper Lissagaray was a long-time socialist activist and writer when the Commune was declared, and in this capacity was a close observer and participant of its rise and fall, heavily involved with the Communal government and defense. After its fall he escaped the slaughter of ex-Communards and escaped to England, where he became close to Karl Marx and had a long-term liaison with his daughter, Eleanor. Though this was not consummated—Marx considered Lissagaray too much older than his daughter—Eleanor

*Marx translated Lissagaray's *History of the Commune*, one of the first detailed accounts of its rise and fall to appear from a Communard perspective.*

Then came the names of those elected members of the Central Committee, about thirty in all, for several arrondissements had not yet voted. This was the regular Central Committee which was to be installed at the Hôtel-de-Ville. Many of those elected had formed part of the preceding commission. The others were all equally obscure, belonging to the proletariat and small middle class, known only to their battalions.

What mattered their obscurity? The Central Committee was not a Government at the head of a party. It had no Utopia to initiate. A very simple idea, fear of the monarchy, could alone have grouped together so many battalions. The National Guard constituted itself an

assurance company against a *coup-d'état*; for if Thiers and his agents repeated the word 'Republic,' their own party and the Assembly cried *Vive le Roi!* The Central Committee was a sentinel, that was all.

The storm was gathering; all was uncertain. The International convoked the Socialist deputies to ask them what to do. But no attack was planned, nor even suggested. The Central Committee formally declared that the first shot would not be fired by the people, and that they would only defend themselves in case of aggression.

[. . .]

The 230,000 men disarmed by the capitulation, mostly mobiles or men having finished their term of service, had been sent home in hot haste, as they would only have swelled the Parisian army. Already some mobiles, marines, and soldiers had laid the basis of a republican association with the National Guards. There remained to Vinoy only the division allowed him by the Prussians and 3,000 sergeants-de-ville or gendarmes, in all 15,000 men, rather ill-conditioned. Lefô sent him a few thousand men picked up in the



armies of the Loire and of the North, but they arrived slowly, almost without cadres, harassed, and disgusted at the service. At Vinoy's very first review they were on the point of mutinying. They left them straggling through Paris, abandoned, mixing with the Parisians, who succoured them, the women bringing them soup and blankets to their huts, where they were freezing. In fact, on the 19th the Government had only about 25,000 men, without cohesion and discipline, two-thirds of them gained over to the faubourgs.

How to disarm 100,000 men with this mob? For, to carry off the cannon, it was necessary to disarm the National Guard. The Parisians were no longer novices in warfare. 'Having taken our cannon,' they said, 'they will make our muskets useless.' The coalition would listen to nothing. Hardly arrived, they urged M. Thiers to act, to lance the abscess at once. The financiers — no doubt the same who had precipitated the war to give fresh impulse to their jobbery — said to him, 'You will never be able to carry out financial operations if you don't make an end of these scoundrels.' All these declared the taking of the cannon would be mere child's play.

* * *

from Adolphe Thiers, *Memoirs*

In the midst of surrender negotiations with Bismark when the Commune was declared, Thiers feared—as indeed Bismark had threatened—that Paris in revolt would discredit the Government of National Defense and result in the Prussians resuming hostilities. The tenuous balance of powers—Monarchist, Imperial, Liberal, and Radical—that composed his government was in danger of collapse.

The first and greatest of these difficulties [to prevent a Democratic insurrection] was to disarm the populace, which was holding four hundred and fifty thousand muskets (this was the total number given up), and had taken possession of an immense quantity of both siege and field artillery. To carry out this perilous operation we had barely eighteen thousand dispirited troops, partly demoralized by the revolutionary ferment in the midst of which they had lived during the siege. General Vinoy, a cool and intelligent officer, was in command.

We settled with him, after having discussed the matter in Council, that he should try, on the 18th of March, in the morning, to get hold of the field artillery parked by the Parisians on the heights of Belleville and Montmartre.

On that date, by five o'clock in the morning, General Vinoy had occupied these positions and had made himself master of the artillery without striking a blow. But on this occasion he failed in that keen vigilance that brings success in war. The guns once taken, he should have put to the teams at once and brought them away, drawing up his troops in the rear so as to assure the success of his operations.

Hurrying up during the night from Versailles, I reached the Staff Office, in the Louvre, where I found the general. He was, he told me, absolutely free from anxiety. I did not share his feeling of security. As long as our guns were not taken away, and the troops



The Federal artillery park on the hill of Montmartre, the day before the National government attempted to remove them on March 18, sparking off the Commune.

stayed idly round them, there was always the fear of having them surrounded by a hostile crowd. Before long, as a matter of fact, aides-de-camp came to warn us that there were very ominous groups forming about the guns, and that it would be most difficult to advance in Paris, with a

thousand or twelve hundred horses dragging artillery, through a mass of the populace, packed and irritated.

* * *

from Prosper Lissagaray, *History of the Paris Commune, 1876*

There was only one thing wanting — teams to convey the spoil. Vinoy had almost forgotten them. At eight o'clock they began to put some horses to the pieces. Meanwhile the faubourgs were awaking and the early shops opening. Around the milkmaids and before the wineshops the people began talking in a low voice; they pointed to the soldiers, the machine-gun levelled at the streets, the walls covered with the still wet poster signed by M. Thiers and his Ministers. The spoke of paralysed commerce, suspended orders, frightened capital:

‘Inhabitants of Paris, in your interest the Government has resolved to act. Let the good citizens separate from the bad ones; let them aid public force; they will render a service to the Republic herself,’ said MM. Pouyer-Quertier, De Larcy, Dufaure and other Republicans. The conclusion is borrowed from the phraseology of December: ‘The culpable shall be surrendered to justice. Order, complete, immediate and unalterable, must be re-established.’ They spoke of order — blood was to be shed.

As in our great days, the women were the first to act. Those of the 18th March, hardened by the siege — they had had a double ration of misery — did not wait for the men. They surrounded the machineguns, apostrophized the sergeant in command of the gun, saying, ‘This is shameful; what are you doing there?’ The soldiers did not answer. Occasionally a non-commissioned officer spoke to them: ‘Come, my good women, get out of the way.’ At the same time a handful of National Guards, proceeding to the post of the Rue



A Parisian crowd carries off cannon from Montmartre.

Doudeauville, there found two drums that had not been smashed, and beat the rappel. At eight o'clock they numbered 300 officers and guards, who ascended the Boulevard Ornano.

They met a platoon of soldiers of the 88th, and, crying, *Vive la République!* enlisted them. The post of the Rue Dejean also joined them, and the butt-end of their muskets raised, soldiers and guards together marched up to the Rue Muller that leads to the Buttes Montmartre, defended on this side by the men of the 88th. These, seeing their comrades intermingling with the guards, signed to them to advance, that they would let them pass. General Lecomte, catching sight of the signs, had the men replaced by *sergents-de-ville*, and confined them in the Tower of Solferino, adding, 'You will get your deserts.' The *sergents-de-ville* discharged a few shots, to which the guards replied. Suddenly a large number of National Guards, the butt-end of their muskets up, women and children, appeared on the other flank from the Rue des Rosiers. Lecomte, surrounded, three times gave the order to fire. His men stood still, their arms ordered. The crowd, advancing, fraternized with them, and Lecomte and his officers were arrested.

[. . .]

No member of the Committee had arrived when, at half-past four, formidable cries filled the street, and hunted by a fierce multitude, a man with a white beard was thrust against the wall of the house. It was Clément-Thomas, the man of June, 1848, the insulter of the revolutionary battalions. He had been recognized and arrested at the Chaussée des Martyrs, where he was examining the barricades.

Some officers of the National Guard, a Garibaldian captain, Herpin-Lacroix, and some franc-tireurs had tried to stop the deadly

mass, repeating a thousand times, 'Wait for the Committee! Constitute a court-martial!' They were jostled, and Clément-Thomas was again seized and hurled into the little garden of the house. Twenty muskets levelled at him battered him down. During this execution the soldiers broke the windows of the room where General Lecomte was confined, threw themselves upon him, dragging him towards the garden. This man, who in the morning had three times given the order to fire upon the people, wept, begged for pity, and spoke of his family. He was forced against the wall and fell under the bullets.

These reprisals over, the wrath of the mass subsided. They allowed the officers of Lecomte's suite to be taken back to the Château-Rouge, and at nightfall they were set at liberty.

* * *

In the face of the revolt in Montmartre, Thiers ordered the entire governmental bureaucracy out of Paris. Since the notoriously radical city had never had the right to elect its own municipal government, this left the city effectively without a functioning government. In the power vacuum that they left, the Central Committee of the National Guard declared itself as the city's provisional government, and debate began within its ranks as to what form of government should be established. Paris was declared an autonomous city, full suffrage was declared for both genders and all races, and elections were set. The returns brought in an overwhelmingly Socialist council, which set out to fundamentally restructure the city's government, economy, and culture. All Representatives

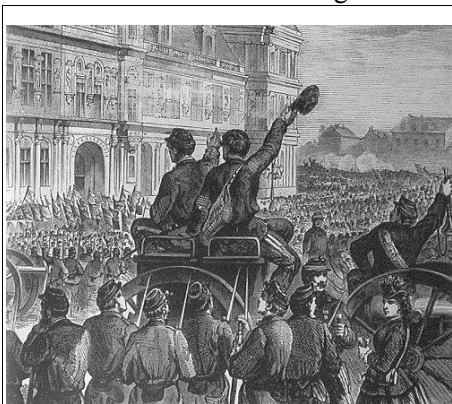
were paid workers' wages and could be recalled by their constituencies at will, at any time; factories and workshops whose owners had fled the city were handed over (with the Commune compensating the owners) to democratic councils of workers who took control of their own workplaces; gender discrimination in pay, inheritance, and divorce laws were abolished; universal education was decreed and began to be put into practice; and scores of other fundamental changes were passed by the Council and began to be put into place.

* * *

The elections were conducted in a way becoming a free people. At the approach to the halls, no police, no intrigues. And yet M. Thiers dared telegraph to the provinces: 'The elections will take place to-day without liberty and without moral authority.' The liberty was so absolute that in all Paris not one single protestation occurred.

The moderate papers even commended the articles of the *Officiel*, in which the delegate Longuet set forth the role of the future Communal Assembly: 'Above all, it must define its mandate, fix the boundaries of its attributes. Its first work must be the discussion and the drawing up of its charter. This done, it must consider the means of having that statute of the municipal autonomy recognized and guaranteed by the central power.' The plainness, the prudence, the moderation which marked all official acts was beginning to move the most obdurate. Only the hatred of the Versaillaise did not abate. That same day M. Thiers cried from the tribune, 'No, France will not let those wretches triumph who would drown her in blood.'

The next day 200,000 'wretches' came to the Hôtel-de-Ville there to install their chosen representatives, the battalion drums beating, the banners surmounted by the Phrygian cap and with red fringe round the muskets; their ranks, swelled by soldiers of the line, artillerymen, and marines faithful to Paris, came down from all the streets to the Place de Greve like the thousand streams of a great river. In the middle of the Hôtel-de-Ville, against the central door, a large platform was raised. Above it towered the bust of the Republic, a red scarf slung round it. Immense red streamers beat against the frontal and the belfry, like tongues of fire announcing the good news to France. A hundred battalions thronged the square, and piled their bayonets, lit up by the sun, in front of the Hôtel-de-Ville. The other battalions that could not get into the place



*Crowds cheer the reading of the
Proclamation of the Commune*

lined the streets up to the Boulevard de Sebastopol and to the quays. The banners were grouped in front of the platform, some tricolour, all with red tassels, symbolizing the advent of the people. While the square was filling, songs burst forth, the bands played the *Marseillaise* and the *Chant du Départ*, trumpets sounded the charge, and the cannon of the old Commune thundered on the quay.

[. . .]

The red sun of civil discord melts veneer and all masks. There they are side by side as in 1791, 1794, and 1848, Monarchists, Clericals, Liberals, Radicals, all of them, their hands raised against the people — one army in different uniforms. Their decentralization is rural and capitalist federalism; their self-government, the exploitation of the budget by themselves, just as the whole political science of their statesmen consists only in massacre and the state of siege.

What bourgeoisie in the world after such immense disasters would not with careful heed have tended such a reservoir of living force?

They, seeing this Paris capable of engendering a new world, her heart swelled with the best blood of France, had but one thought — to bleed Paris.

* * *

from Adolphe Thiers, *Memoirs*

Many persons, sometimes very excellent people too (the courageous and honourable Schœlcher was one of them), would have liked to obviate the punishment that awaited the members of the Commune, among whom they counted misguided friends of their own ; others were afraid lest the Republic should be carried away into a civil war. Both these parties, seeking for a way to put an end to the struggle with the insurrection, came to tell me they hoped to persuade the heads of that insurrection to yield, if I did not make conditions too severe for them. I made the same reply to all.

" Do you come in the name of the Commune ? I have no ears for you ; I do not recognize belligerents."

"No," they would answer, "we come in our own names, to prevent the shedding of blood. Assure the heads of the Commune that their lives will be spared, and promise us that the army will not enter Paris ; on these conditions we promise to have the struggle brought to an end."

" I have no conditions to accept and no engagements to make. The reign of law will be established in Paris absolutely, and the guilty, whoever they may be, shall be submitted to that law. As for the army, in France it is everywhere at home ; it will enter Paris in a body and will plant the tricolour where the red flag has flown. Paris will be as much obedient and submissive to the power of the State as a hamlet of a hundred inhabitants."

Such invariably was my reply.

* * *

from Prosper Lissagaray, *History of the Paris Commune, 1876*

In a situation where no army or government was universally recognised, even the names of the opposing forces were not standard. In Lissagaray's texts, Communal forces are referred to as 'Communal', 'Communist', 'Federal' , 'Republican', or 'National Guard'. The forces of Thiers' government are usually called 'Versaillaise' or sarcastically as the 'Forces of Order'. Thiers generally calls the Communards 'Republicans' or 'Socialists' and his own forces as 'ours' or 'we'.

In the evening the Versaillaise again opened fire. It had not ceased against the forts of the south. That same day the enemy unmasked on this side the batteries he had been constructing for a fortnight — the first part of the plan of General Thiers.

He had on the 6th placed all the troops under the command of that MacMahon, his stains of Sedan still upon him. The army at this time was 46,000 strong, for the most part the residuum of depots, incapable of any serious action. To reinforce it and obtain soldiers, M. Thiers had sent Jules Favre whining to Bismarck. The Prussians had set free 60,000 prisoners on harsher conditions of peace, and authorized their ally Thiers to augment to 130,000 men the number of soldiers round Paris, which, according to the preliminaries of peace, were not to have exceeded 40,000 men. On the 25th April the Versaillaise army comprised five corps, two of them, those of Douai and Clinchant, composed of the released prisoners from Germany and a reserve commanded by Vinoy, all in all 110,000 men. It increased to 170,000 receiving rations, of whom 130,000 were combatants. M. Thiers displayed real ability in setting it against Paris. The soldiers were well fed, well dressed, severely overlooked; discipline was reestablished. There occurred mysterious disappearances of officers guilty of having given utterance to their horror at this fratricidal war. Still this was not yet the army for an attack, the men always scampering away before a steady resistance. Despite official brag, the generals only counted upon the artillery, to which they owed the successes of Courbevoie and of Asnières. Paris was only to be overcome by fire.

* * *

from Prosper Lissagaray, *History of the Paris Commune, 1876*

What forces and what plan did the Commune oppose?

The returns stated about 96,000 men and 4,000 officers for the active National Guard; for the reserve, 100,000 men and 3,500 officers. Thirty-six free corps claimed to number 3,450 men. All deductions made, 60,000 combatants might have been obtained had they known how to set about it. But the weakness of the Council, the difficulty of supervision and repression, allowed the less brave and those who did not stand in need of pay, to shirk all control. Many contrived to limit their services to the interior of Paris. Thus for want of order the effective forces remained very weak, and the line from St. Ouen to Ivry was never held by more than 15,000 or 16,000 Federals.

* * *

As the city was once more put under siege, starved and bombed—this time by the French Army, supported by the Prussians (who extended the armistice, allowed the French army to take position outside Paris while hemming the Commune in on other sides, and released thousands of POWs early in order to fight against the city) and with the encouragement of other European powers—the Commune quickly re-established city services that had been sabotaged when the national government abandoned the city. The postal service, gas lighting, refuse collection, schools, the mint, libraries, museums, theatres, and other public works were fully operational within days—now under the control and supervision of their lowest-paid workers.

* * *

Most of these Services were under the superintendence of workmen or former subordinate employees, and were all carried on with a fourth part of their ordinary numerical strength. The director of the postal department, Theisz, a chaser, found the Service quite disorganized, the divisional offices closed, the stamps hidden away or carried off, the material, seals, the carts, etc. taken away, and the coffers empty. Notices posted up in the hall and courts ordered the employees to proceed to Versailles on pain of dismissal, but Theisz acted with promptitude and energy. When the subordinate employees who had not been forewarned came as usual to organize the mail service, he addressed them, discussed with them, and had the doors shut. Little by little they gave way. Some functionaries who were Socialists also lent their help, and the direction of the various services was entrusted to the head-clerks. The divisional offices were opened, and in forty-eight hours the collection and distribution of letters for Paris reorganized. As to the letters destined for the provinces, clever agents threw them into the offices of St. Denis and ten miles round, while for the introduction of letters into Paris every latitude was given to private initiative. A superior council was instituted, which raised the wages of postmen, sorters, porters and office caretakers, shortened the time of service as supernumeraries, and decided that the ability of the employees should be tested for the future by means of tests and examinations.

[. . .]

Two devoted and talented men, Elisée Reclus and B. Gastineau, were charged with the reorganization of the National

Library. They forbade the lending of books, thus putting an end to the scandalous practice by which a privileged few carved out a private library from public collections. The federation of artists, presided over by Courbet, elected member of the Council on the 16th April, occupied itself with the reopening and superintendence of the museums.

[. . .]

The delegation for Labour wanted to look carefully into the contracts of the commissariat. It demonstrated that in the case of contracts adjudicated to the lowest bidder, the running down of prices falls upon wages and not on the profit of the contractor. 'And the Commune is blind enough to lend itself to such manoeuvres,' said the report, 'and at this very moment, when the working man dares death rather than submit any longer to this exploitation.' The delegate demanded that the estimate of charges should specify the cost of labour, that the orders should be preference be given to the workmen's corporations, and the contracting prices fixed by arbitration between the commissariat, the Trade Union Chamber of the corporation, and the delegate for Labour.

* * *

from Adolphe Thiers, *Memoirs*

Though Versailles had been named the new capital of France, the Government of National Defense soon moved their operations to Bordeaux, farther from Paris, for fear of a march on the city such as that which had occurred in the first French Revolution.

Even in Bordeaux, where at that time we only had two regiments, incomplete in numbers and not very reliable, to oppose to twenty thousand Republican National Guards, all tinged with fanaticism, the Assembly was so far from being able to attempt to restore the Monarchy, that it could not have managed to take the power from the grasp of M. Gambetta without the energetic intervention of M. Jules Simon and the other delegates of the Government of National Defence, expressly sent from Paris to ensure the regularity of the elections.

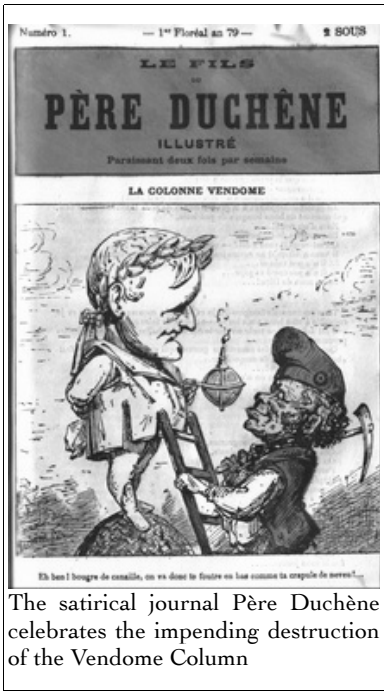
Besides, the Assembly so clearly recognized the necessity of acknowledging the Republic *de facto*, that it entrusted me with the supreme power, with the title of Head of the Executive of the French Republic — a title which provoked no protests from the Royalists. Neither did they protest against my language when, at the sitting of February 19, 1871, I declared from the tribune in set terms that I accepted power to exercise it in the name of the Republic until the day when, the task of restoring the nation having been accomplished, France would be called upon to pronounce on her future destiny.

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from Prosper Lissagaray, *History of the Paris Commune, 1876*

This was certainly something; but the rural votes, the past of M. Thiers, clashed with these Republican protestations. The former heroes of the National Defence were no longer acceptable as securities even for the provinces. M. Thiers was well aware of it, and invoked the purest of the pure, the experienced men returned from

exile. Their prestige was still intact in the eyes of the provincial democrats. M. Thiers met them in the lobbies, told them they held the fate of the Republic in their hands, flattered their senile vanity, and inveigled them so successfully, that, from the 23rd, they served him as bottle-holders. When the middle-class republicans of the provinces beheld the profound Louis Blanc, the intelligent Schoelcher, and the most famous grumblers of the radical vanguard fly to Versailles, and insult the Central Committee, and, on the other hand, received neither programme nor able emissaries from Paris, they turned away, and let the flame enkindled by the workmen die out.



* * *

The Realist painter Gustave Courbet had been elected president of the Federation of Artists and member of the Communal Council. He now directed a long-cherished project of the Left: the destruction of the Vendôme Column. This column, topped with a statue of Napoleon Bonaparte, was a monument of French Imperialism—both that of Napoleon I, whom it represented and who had ended the First Republic, and by extension that of Napoleon III, who had ended the Second Republic. The ceremony of its destruction was attended by thousands of spectators.

[The Vendôme Column] had been pulled down the evening before with great ceremony. Its demolition, the idea of which had become quite current during the first siege, was decreed on the 12th April. This inspiration, popular, humane, profound,



Parisians pose in celebration atop the toppled Vendôme Column. This photograph was used after the Commune's fall to identify Communard sympathizers for execution and deportation.

showing that a war of classes was to supersede the war of nations, aimed at the same time a blow at the ephemeral triumph of the Prussian. The rather expensive preparations, costing almost 15,000 francs, had been much protracted, owing to the lukewarmness of the engineer and the continual efforts to suborn the workmen. On the 16th May, at two o'clock, an immense crowd thronged all the neighbouring streets, rather anxious as to the result of the operation. The reactionaries foretold all sorts of catastrophes; the engineer, on the contrary, affirmed that there would be no shock; that the column would break to pieces during its descent. He had sawn it horizontally a little above the pedestal; a slanting groove was to facilitate the fall backwards upon a vast bed of faggots, sand and dung, accumulated in the direction of the Rue de la Paix.

A rope attached to the summit of the column was twisted round a capstan fixed at the entrance of the street. The square was crowded with National Guards; the windows, the roofs were filled

with curious spectators. In default of MM. Jules Simon and Ferry, erstwhile warm partisans of the operation, M. Glais-Bizoin congratulated the new prefect of police, Ferre, who had just taken the place of Cournet, and confided to him that for forty years it had been his ardent desire to see the expiatory monument demolished. The bands played the *Marseillaise*, the capstan turned about, the pulley broke, and a man was wounded. Already rumours of treason circulated among the crowd, but a second pulley was soon supplied. At a quarter past five an officer appeared on the balustrade for some time, waved a tricolor flag, then fixed it on the rails. At half-past five the capstan again turned, and a few minutes after the extremity of the column slowly displaced itself, the shaft little by little gave way, then, suddenly reeling to and fro, broke and fell with a low moan. The head of Bonaparte rolled on the ground, and his parricidal arm lay detached from the trunk. An immense acclamation, as that of a people freed from a yoke, burst forth. The ruins were climbed upon and saluted by enthusiastic cries, and the red flag floated from the purified Pedestal, which on that day had become the altar of the human race.

* * *

from Adolphe Thiers, *Memoirs*

The Government of National Defense distributed a considerable amount of money to spies and saboteurs to disrupt the operations of the Commune—many of whom simply absconded with the money. In the end it was not a paid spy but an anti-Communard civilian who discovered on May 21 that, due to lack of communication between National Guard units, a huge gap in the Paris defenses had been left entirely unguarded. The fall

of the Commune was underway, although another week of street fighting and barricade combat remained.

The fire from Montretout had demolished the Point-du-Jour gate, the debris of which and of the drawbridge had filled the ditch in a way that made a practicable passage. All firing from the fortress had ceased: our soldiers, always daring and inquisitive, jumping up on the breastwork of the trenches, had seen a man on the abandoned rampart waving a handkerchief.

This was the famous Ducatel who, animated by an honest and courageous zeal, had gone forward thus far and was signaling to our soldiers the possibility of entering. The men had run to the broken gate and had penetrated within the fortifications, passing over the broken timbers of the drawbridge. The General had entered with them, and finding some deserted field-guns, he had sent to fetch shells for them. This was the explanation of the movements to and fro of the soldiers going in and out, which had made us so uneasy for a moment.

* * *

from Prosper Lissagaray, *History of the Paris Commune, 1876*

The Versaillese were slaughtering within the walls of Paris and Paris knew it not. The night was clear, starlit, mild, fragrant; the theatres were crowded, the boulevards sparkling with life and gaiety, the bright cafés swarming with visitors, and the cannon were everywhere hushed — a silence unknown for three weeks. If ‘the

finest army that France ever had’ were to push straight on by the quays and boulevards, entirely free of barricades, with one bound, without firing a shot, it would crush the Commune of Paris.

[. . .]



A Commune poster from April, 1871 urging citizens to contribute to work on the barricades.

Every passer-by was requisitioned. ‘Come, citizen, lend a hand for the Republic!’ At the Bastille and in the interior boulevards one met crowds of workers, some digging the earth, others carrying the paving-stones; children using spades and mattocks as big as as themselves. The women encouraged the men; the delicate hand of the young girl raised the heavy pickaxe that fell with a sharp sound, emitting fery sparks. It took an hour to seriously break through the soil. What

matter! they will spend their night at it. On the Tuesday evening, at the intersection of the Square St. Jacques and the Boulevard Sebastopol, many market women worked for a long time, filling earth sacks and wicker baskets.

* * *

from Adolphe Thiers, *Memoirs*

The struggle against the Commune, from the entry of the army into Paris, resolved itself into a succession of street fights, in which the army, continually undergoing point-blank fire without any chance to return it before clearing the barricades, took furious

vengeance on the vanquished, as soon as they were in its grasp. I issued most severe orders in the endeavour to restrain the soldiers' wrath, and the Marshal on his part did all he could to prevent bloodshed. Unhappily, this street battle lasted a whole week, from the 21st to the 28th of May !

* * *

from Prosper Lissagaray, *History of the Paris Commune, 1876*

The Batignolles and Montmartre witnessed the first wholesale massacres. Every individual wearing a uniform or regulation boots was shot., as a matter of course, without questions put, without explanations given. Thus the Versaillaise had been assassinating since the morning in the Place des Batignolles, Place de L'Hôtel-de-Ville, and at the gate of Clichy. The Parc Monceaux was their principal slaughter-house in the seventeenth arrondissement. At Montmartre the centres of massacre were the Buttes, the Elysée, of which every step was strewn with corpses, and the exterior boulevards.

[. . .]

They were still fighting at one end of a street when the conquered part was already being sacked. Woe to him who possessed arms or a uniform! Woe to him who betrayed dismay! Woe to him who was denounced by a political or personal enemy! He was dragged away. Each corps had its regular executioner, the provost; but to speed the business there were supplementary provosts in the streets. The victims were led there — shot. The blind fury of the

soldiers encouraged by the men of order served their hatred and liquidated their debts. Theft followed massacre. The shops of the tradesmen who had supplied the Commune, or whom their rival shopkeepers accused, were given over to pillage; the soldiers smashed their furniture and carried off the objects of value. jewels, wine, liqueurs, provisions, linen, perfumery, disappeared into their knapsacks.

* * *

from Adolphe Thiers, *Memoirs*

As soon as I arrived at Versailles I went to inform the Assembly of the army's entry into Paris. During the sitting of May 22, 1871, they unanimously testified their satisfaction and gratitude in the following resolution :

" The Assembly declares that the land and sea forces, and the Head of the Executive Power of the Republic have deserved well of their country."

* * *

from Prosper Lissagaray, *History of the Paris Commune, 1876*

Order reigned in Paris. Everywhere ruins, death, sinister crepitations. The officers walked provokingly about clashing their sabres; the non-commissioned officers imitated their arrogance. The soldiers bivouacked in all the large roads. Some, stupefied by fatigue and carnage, slept on the pavement; others prepared their soup by the side of the corpses, singing the songs of their native homes.

The tricolor flag hung from all the windows in order to prevent house-searches. Guns, cartridge-boxes, uniforms, were piled up in the gutters of the popular quarters. Before the doors sat women leaning their heads upon their hands, looking fixedly before them, waiting for a son or a husband who was never to return.

* * *

from Adolphe Thiers, *Memoirs*

Suddenly a terrible sight struck the whole army, and all the honest and peaceable population left in Paris, with blank amazement and horror. Tremendous flames shot up from the Tuileries, the Palais-Royal, the offices of the Legion of Honour, the Cour des Comptes, the H6tel de Ville, the Ministry of Finance. The insurgents, in their criminal rage, seeing Paris falling through their hands, wished to leave us nothing but ruins. They had dashed paraffin over the walls and on the inside of all these public

monuments, and set them on fire as they were forced to withdraw before the army. The Louvre and its priceless collection only escaped



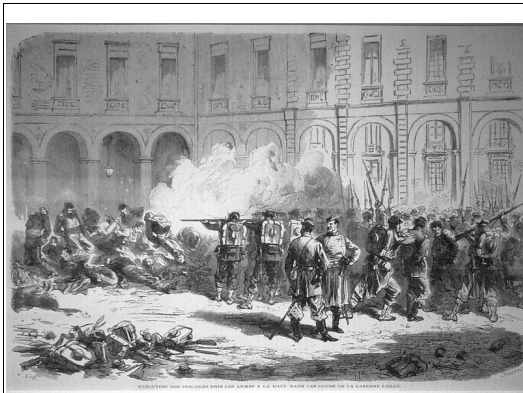
The prominent role of women in the Commune deeply disturbed conservatives. This anti-Commune postcard from 1871 pictures the right-wing bogey of the 'Pétroleuse'--boogies of Socialist women who supposedly roamed Paris committing aimless arson during the final assault.

destruction through the devotion and courage of their keeper, M. Barbet de Jouy, aided by a few of the attendants who stood manfully by their post. Barely another hour and many of the greatest works of human genius would have been lost for ever.

* * *

from Prosper Lissagaray, *History of the Paris Commune, 1876*

As the barricades were overcome, killings began in what came to be known as 'The Bloody Week'. There were mass executions throughout the city without trial or with summary, on-the-spot 'courts martial' only minutes long and without impartial witnesses; tens of thousands were arrested, many destined for deportation. Estimates of the number killed vary wildly; some as low as 5,000, most ranging from 30,000—50,000.



A mass execution at the Caserne Dupleix, near City Hall.

It was butchery, nothing more, nothing less. At other places the prisoners were conducted before the prevotal courts, with which Paris swarmed since the Monday. These had not sprung up at random, and, as

has been believed, in the midst of the fury of the struggle. It was proved before the courts-martial that the number and seats of these prevotal courts, with their respective jurisdictions, had been

appointed at Versailles before the entry of the troops. One of the most celebrated was that of the Châtelet Theatre, where Colonel Vabre officiated. Thousands of prisoners who were led there were first of all penned in upon the stage and in the auditorium, under the guns of the soldiers placed in the boxes; then, little by little, like sheep driven to the door of the slaughter-house, from wing to wing they were pushed to the saloon, where, round a large table, officers of the army and the honest National Guard were seated 'their sabres between their legs, cigars in their mouths. The examination lasted a quarter of a minute. 'Did you take arms? Did you serve the Commune? Show your hands.' If the resolute attitude of a prisoner betrayed a combatant, if his face was unpleasant, without asking for his name, his profession, without entering any note upon any register, he was *classed*. 'You?' was said to the next one, and so on to the end of the file, without excepting the women, children, and old men. When by a caprice a prisoner was spared, he was said to be *ordinary*, and reserved for Versailles. No one was liberated.

The *classed* ones were at once delivered to the executioners, who led them into the nearest garden or court. From the Châtelet, for instance, they were taken to the Lebau Barracks. There the doors were no sooner closed than the gendarmes fired, without even grouping their victims before a platoon. Some, only wounded, ran along by the walls, the gendarmes chasing and shooting at them till they fell dead. Moreau of the Central Committee perished in one of these gangs. Surprised on the Thursday evening in the Rue de Rivoli, he was conducted into the garden and placed against a terrace. There

were so many victims, that the soldiers, tired out, were obliged to rest their guns actually against the sufferers. The wall of the terrace was covered with brains; the executioners waded through pools of blood.

* * *

from Prosper Lissagaray, *History of the Paris Commune, 1876*

How to justify this savagery? The official reports only mention very few deaths among the Versaillese — 877 during the whole time of the operations, from the 3rd April up to the 28th May . The Versaillese fury had then no excuse for these reprisals. When a handful of exasperated men, to avenge thousands of their brothers, shoot sixty-three of their most inveterate enemies out of nearly 300 whom they had in their hands, the hypocritical reaction veils its face and protests in the name of justice. What, then, will this justice say when those shall be judged who methodically, without any anxiety as to the issue of the combat, and, above all, the battle over, shot 20,000 persons, of whom three-fourths had not taken part in the fight? Still some flashes of humanity were shown by the soldiers, and some were seen coming back from the executions their heads bowed down; but the officers never slackened for one second in their ferocity. Even after the Sunday they still slaughtered the prisoners, shouted 'Bravo!' at the executions. The courage of the victims they called insolence. Let be responsible before Paris, France, the new generation, for these deeds of infamy.

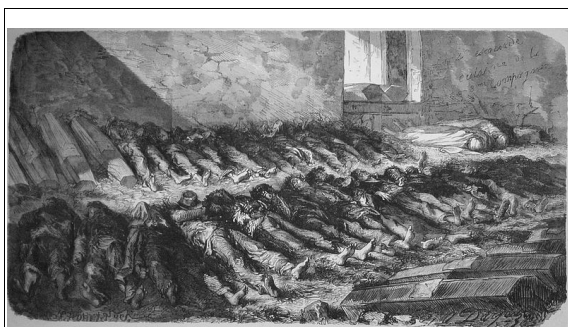
At last the smell of the carnage began to choke even the most frantic. The plague was coming, if pity did not. Myriads of flesh-flies

flew up from the putrefied corpses. The streets were full of dead birds.

[. . .]

The executions abated, and the sweeping off began. Carriages of all kinds, vans, omnibuses, came to pick up the corpses and traversed the town. Since the great plagues of London and Marseilles, such cart-loads of human flesh had not been seen. These exhumations proved that a great number of people had been buried alive. Imperfectly shot, and thrown with the heaps of dead into the common grave, they had eaten earth, and showed the contortions of their violent agony. Certain corpses were taken up in pieces. It was necessary to shut them as soon as possible into closed wagons, and to take them with the utmost speed to the cemeteries, where immense graves of lime swallowed up these putrid masses.

The cemeteries of Paris absorbed all they could. The victims, placed side by side, without any other covering than their clothes, filled enormous ditches at the Père la Chaise, Montmartre, Mont-Parnasse, where the people in pious remembrance will annually come as pilgrims. Others, more unfortunate, were carried out of the town. At Charonne, Bagnolet,



After the city ran out of coffins, the bodies of executed Communards were collected in locations scattered throughout the city, such as this in the Rue Oudinot.

Bicêtre, etc. the trenches dug during the first siege were utilized. 'There nothing is to be feared of the cadaverous emanations,' said *La Liberté* 'an impure blood will water the soil of the labourer, fecundating it. The deceased delegate at war will be able to pass a review of his faithful followers at the hour of midnight; the watchword will be *Incendiarism and assassination*.' Women by the side of the lugubrious trench endeavoured to recognize these remains. The police waited that their grief should betray them, in order to arrest those 'females of insurgents.'

The burying of such a large number of corpses soon became too difficult, and they were burnt in the casemates of the fortifications; but for want of draught the combustion was incomplete, and the bodies were reduced to a pulp. At the Buttes Chaumont the corpses, piled up in enormous heaps, inundated with petroleum, were burnt in the open air.

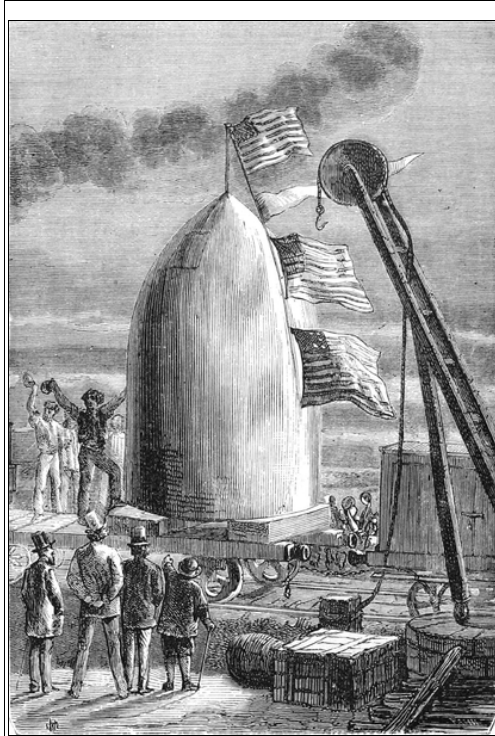
The wholesale massacres lasted up to the first days of June, and the summary executions up to the middle of that month. For a long time mysterious dramas were enacted in the Bois de Boulogne . Never will the exact number of the victims of the Bloody Week be known. The chief of military justice admitted 17,000 shot, the municipal council of Paris paid the expenses of burial of 17,000 corpses; but a great number were killed out of Paris or burnt. There is no exaggeration in saying 20,000 at least.

[. . .]

In the month of June, 1872, the greater part of the work of repression was done. Of the 36,309 prisoners, men, women, and children, without counting the 5,000 military prisoners, to whom the Versailles have confessed, 1,179, said they, had died in their prisons; 22,326 had been liberated after long winter months in the pontoons, the forts, and the prisons; 10,488 brought before the courts-martial, who had condemned 8,525 of them. The persecutions did not cease. On the advent of MacMahon, the 24th May, 1873, there set in a recrudescence. On the 1st January, 1875, the general résumé of Versaillese justice gave 10,137 condemnations pronounced in presence of the accused, and 3,313 in default.

Section 4:

Positivism & the Third Republic



Though the Third Republic experienced considerable political turmoil and discontent, steady economic growth and a barrage of scientific advances fostered a general attitude of optimism and hope. This spirit came to be known as Positivism, and soon permeated all aspects of culture. Alongside faith in technological progress came faith in political and social progress. No more violent revolutions would be necessary for the advance of humanity, Positivism declared: society was on the right track, and a steady series of reforms would inevitably accompany the scientific progress that would one day make Western society into a Liberal utopia.

Positivism

from Frances Willard, *A Wheel Within a Wheel: How I Learned to Ride a Bicycle*, 1895

The government and private investors of the Third Republic continued to pour funding into scientific research and development as during the Second Empire. A constant stream of inventions flooded the market, raising France's prestige in Europe and transforming the lives of millions of middle-class citizens. In 1869 the bicycle was refined to the point where it became affordable to the lower-middle class. As a result, faster and longer-range transportation became available to large portions of the population who had never been able to afford a horse. As with many inventions, it had more unexpected social consequences as well. Frances Willard, an American Feminist and Prohibitionist, describes how unfamiliar the machine was when first encountered by consumers, and the way in which it transformed the lives of women in rural areas who discovered a new mobility and capacity for physical exercise denied to them for centuries.



American activist and educator Frances Willard

Living in the country, far from the artificial restraints and conventions by which most girls are hedged from the activities that would develop a good physique, and endowed with the

companionship of a mother who let me have my own sweet will, I "ran wild" until my sixteenth birthday, when the hampering long skirts were brought, with their accompanying corset and high heels; my hair was clubbed up with pins, and I remember writing in my journal, in the first heartbreak of a young human colt taken from its pleasant pasture, "Altogether, I recognize that my occupation is gone."



*The **Velocipede**, designed in 1868 by Pierre Michaux and Pierre Lallement, was the first bicycle to be mass-produced at prices affordable to the lower middle class.*

From that time on I always realized and was obedient to the limitations thus imposed, though in my heart of hearts I felt their unwisdom even more than their injustice. My work then changed from my beloved and breezy outdoor world to the indoor realm of study, teaching, writing, speaking, and went on almost without a

break or pain until my fifty-third year, when the loss of my mother accentuated the strain of this long period in which mental and physical life were out of balance, and I fell into a mild form of what is called nerve-wear by the patient and nervous prostration by the lookers-on. Thus ruthlessly thrown out of the usual lines of reaction on my environment, and sighing for new worlds to conquer, I determined that I would learn the bicycle.

An English naval officer had said to me, after learning it himself, "You women have no idea of the new realm of happiness which the bicycle has opened to us men." Already I knew well enough that tens of thousands who could never afford to own, feed, and stable a horse, had by this bright invention enjoyed the swiftness of motion which is perhaps the most fascinating feature of material life, the charm of a wide outlook upon the natural world, and that sense of mastery which is probably the greatest attraction in horseback-riding. But the steed that never tires, and is "mettlesome" in the fullest sense of the word, is full of tricks and capers, and to hold his head steady and make him prance to suit you is no small accomplishment. I had often mentioned in my temperance writings that the bicycle was perhaps our strongest ally in winning voting men away from public-houses, because it afforded them a pleasure far more enduring, and an exhilaration as much more delightful as the natural is than the unnatural.

[. . .]

Actions speak so much louder than words that I here set before you what may be called a feminine bicycler's first position — at least it was mine.

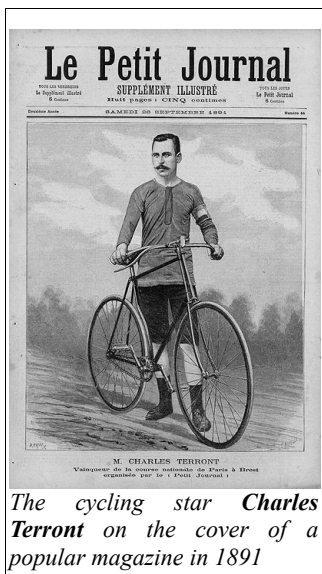
Given a safety-bicycle's pneumatic tires and all the rest of it which renders the pneumatic safety the only safe Bucephalus, the gearing carefully wired in so that we shall not be entangled. "Woe is me!" was my first exclamation, naturally enough interpreted by my outriders "Whoa is me," and they "whoaed;" indeed, we did little else but "check up."

(Just here let me interpolate: Learn on a low machine, but "fly high" when once you have mastered it, as you have much more power over the wheels and can get up better speed with a less expenditure of force when you are above the instrument than when you are at the back of it. And remember this is as true of the world as of the wheel)

The order of evolution was something like this: First, three young Englishmen, all strong-armed and accomplished bicyclers, held the maphine in place while I climbed timidly into the saddle. Second, two well-disposed young women put in all the power they had, until they grew red in the face, off-setting each other's pressure on the cross-bar and thus maintaining the equipoise to which I was unequal. Third, one walked beside me, steadyiing the ark as best she could by holding the center of the deadly cross-bar, to let go whose handles meant chaos and collapse. After this I was able to hold my own if I had the moral support of my kind trainers, and it passed into a proverb among them, the short emphatic word of command I gave them at every few turns of the wheel: "Let go, but stand by." Still later everything was learned — how to sit, how to pedal, how to turn, how to dismount ; but alas ! how to vault into the saddle I found not; that was the coveted power that lingered long and would not yield itself.

[. . .]

Another thing I found is that we carry in the mind a picture of the road; and if it is humpy by reason of pebbles, even if we steer clear of them, we can by no means skim along as happily as when its



smoothness facilitates the pleasing impression on the retina; indeed, the whole science and practice of the bicycle is "in your eye" and in your will; the rest is mere manipulation.

[...]

I began to feel that myself plus the bicycle equaled myself plus the world, upon whose spinning-wheel we must all learn to ride, or fall into the sluiceways of oblivion and despair.

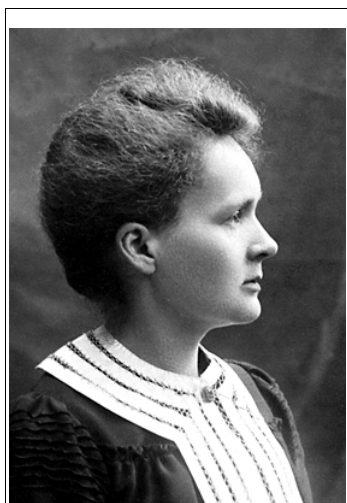
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Marie Curie, *The Discovery of Radium*, 1921

Working in close collaboration with her husband Pierre, the Marie Curie became one of the most successful and famous research scientists of the century. Among many achievements, she was the discoverer of several new elements and pioneered research into both the nature and medical applications of radiation.

I could tell you many things about radium and radioactivity and it would take a long time. But as we cannot do that, I shall only give you a short account of my early work about radium. Radium is no more a baby, it is more than twenty years old, but the conditions of the discovery were somewhat peculiar, and so it is always of interest to remember them and to explain them.

We must go back to the year 1897. Professor Curie and I worked at that time in the laboratory of the school of Physics and Chemistry where Professor Curie held his lectures. I was engaged in some work on uranium rays which had been discovered two years before by Professor Becquerel. I shall tell you how these uranium rays may be detected. If you take a photographic plate and wrap it in black paper and then on this plate, protected from ordinary light, put some uranium salt and leave it a day, and the next day the plate is developed, you notice on the plate a black spot at the place where the uranium salt was. This spot has been made by special rays which are given out by the uranium and are able to make an impression on the plate in the same way as ordinary light. You can also test those rays in another way, by placing them on an electroscope. You know what an electroscope is. If you charge it, you can keep it charged several



Marie Curie, photographed here in 1903, discovered the element Radium in 1898 with her partner and husband Pierre Curie.

hours and more, unless uranium salts are placed near to it. But if this is the case the electroscope loses its charge and the gold or aluminum leaf falls gradually in a progressive way. The speed with which the leaf moves may be used as a measure of the intensity of the rays; the greater the speed, the greater the intensity.

[. . .]

We had not even a good laboratory at that time. We worked in

a hangar where there were no improvements, no good chemical arrangements. We had no help, no money. And because of that the work could not go on as it would have done under better conditions. I did myself the numerous crystallizations which were wanted to get the radium salt separated from the barium salt with which it is obtained out of the ore. And in 1902 I finally succeeded in getting pure radium chloride and determining the atomic weight of the new element radium, which is 226, while that of barium is only 137.

[. . .]

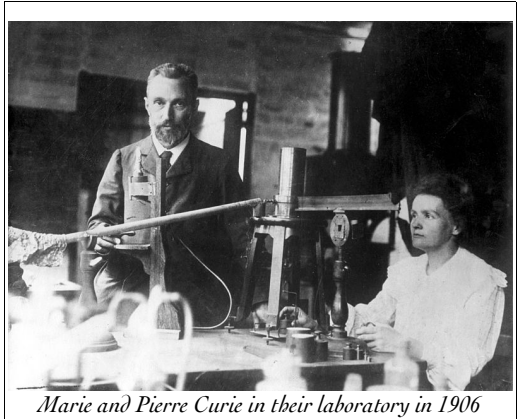
Now, the special interest of radium is in the intensity of its rays which is several million times greater than the uranium rays. And the effects of the rays make the radium so important. If we take a practical point of view, then the most important property of the rays is the production of physiological effects on the cells of the human organism. These effects may be used for the cure of several diseases. Good results have been obtained in many cases. What is considered particularly important is the treatment of cancer. The medical utilization of radium makes it necessary to get that element in sufficient quantities. And so a factory of radium was started to begin with in France, and later in America where a big quantity of ore named carnotite is available. America does produce many grams of radium every year but the price is still very high because the quantity of radium contained in the ore is so small. The radium is more than a hundred thousand times dearer than gold.

But we must not forget that when radium was discovered no one knew that it would prove useful in hospitals. The work was one of pure science. And this is a proof that scientific work must not be considered from the point of view of the direct usefulness of it. It must be done for itself, for the beauty of science, and then there is always the chance that a scientific discovery may become like the radium a benefit for humanity.

But science is not rich, it does not dispose of important means, it does not generally meet recognition before the material usefulness of it has been proved. The factories produce many grams of radium every year, but the laboratories have very small quantities. It is the same for my laboratory and I am very grateful to the American women who wish me to have more of radium and give me the opportunity of doing more work with it.

The scientific history of radium is beautiful. The properties of the rays have been studied very closely. We know that particles are expelled from radium with a very great velocity near to that of the light. We know that the atoms of radium are destroyed by expulsion of these particles, some of which are atoms of helium. And in that way it has been proved that the radioactive elements are constantly disintegrating and that they produce at the end ordinary elements, principally helium and lead. That is, as you see, a theory of transformation of atoms which are not stable, as was believed before, but may undergo spontaneous changes.

Radium is not alone in having these properties. Many having other radioelements are known already, the polonium, the mesothorium, the radiothorium, the actinium. We know also radioactive gases, named emanations. There is a great variety of substances and effects in radioactivity. There is always a vast field left to experimentation and I hope that we may have some beautiful progress in the following years. It is my earnest desire that some of you should carry on this scientific work and keep for your ambition the determination to make a permanent contribution to science.



Marie and Pierre Curie in their laboratory in 1906

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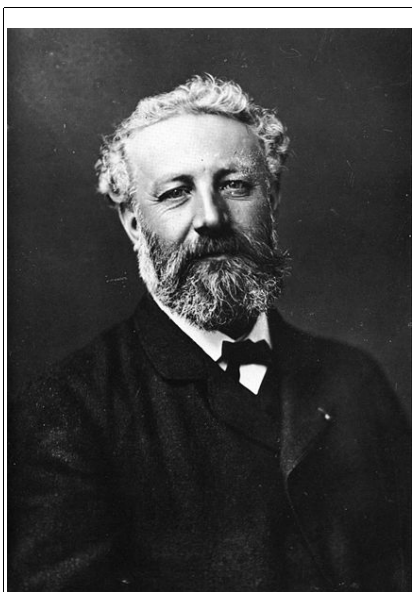
From Jules Verne, *Voyage to the Moon*, 1865

*Jules Verne perfectly channeled the public's growing fascination with technology in books of adventure filled with fantastic machines, almost single-handedly developing the Science Fiction genre. In the process he became the most popular writer in France, if not all Europe. In ***Voyage to the Moon*** and its sequel ***Around the Moon***, Verne was largely responsible for introducing the idea of flying to the moon to a mass audience as a scientifically valid idea; he anticipated many of the difficulties of space travel, such as*

the disposal of waste in a zero-gravity environment, and indeed many of his ideas such as the capsule landing in the ocean to be winched out by specially equipped ships.

THE PROJECTILE-VEHICLE

On the completion of the Columbiad the public interest centered in the projectile itself, the vehicle which was destined to carry the three hardy adventurers into space.



Jules Verne, photographed by Nadar

The new plans had been sent to Breadwill and Co., of Albany, with the request for their speedy execution. The projectile was consequently cast on the 2nd of November, and immediately forwarded by the Eastern Railway to Stones Hill, which it reached without accident on the 10th of that month, where Michel Ardan, Barbicane, and Nicholl were waiting impatiently for it.

The projectile had now to be filled to the depth of three feet with a bed of water, intended to support a water-tight wooden disc, which worked easily within the walls of the projectile. It was upon this kind of raft that the travelers were to take their place. This body of water was divided by horizontal partitions, which the shock of the departure would have to break in succession. Then each sheet of the

water, from the lowest to the highest, running off into escape tubes toward the top of the projectile, constituted a kind of spring; and the wooden disc, supplied with extremely powerful plugs, could not strike the lowest plate except after breaking successively the different partitions. Undoubtedly the travelers would still have to encounter a violent recoil after the complete escapement of the water; but the first shock would be almost entirely destroyed by this powerful spring. The upper parts of the walls were lined with a thick padding of leather, fastened upon springs of the best steel, behind which the escape tubes were completely concealed; thus all imaginable precautions had been taken for averting the first shock; and if they did get crushed, they must, as Michel Ardan said, be made of very bad materials.

The entrance into this metallic tower was by a narrow aperture contrived in the wall of the cone. This was hermetically closed by a plate of aluminum, fastened internally by powerful screw-pressure. The travelers could therefore quit their prison at pleasure, as soon as they should reach the moon.

Light and view were given by means of four thick lenticular glass scuttles, two pierced in the circular wall itself, the third in the bottom, the fourth in the top. These scuttles then were protected against the shock of departure by plates let into solid grooves, which could easily be opened outward by unscrewing them from the inside. Reservoirs firmly fixed contained water and the necessary provisions; and fire and light were procurable by means of gas, contained in a special reservoir under a pressure of several atmospheres. They had

only to turn a tap, and for six hours the gas would light and warm this comfortable vehicle.

There now remained only the question of air; for allowing for the consumption of air by Barbicane, his two companions, and two dogs which he proposed taking with him, it was necessary to renew the air of the projectile. Now air consists principally of twenty-one parts of oxygen and seventy-nine of nitrogen. The lungs absorb the oxygen, which is indispensable for the support of life, and reject the nitrogen. The air expired loses nearly five per cent. of the former and contains nearly an equal volume of carbonic acid, produced by the combustion of the elements of the blood. In an air-tight enclosure, then, after a certain time, all the oxygen of the air will be replaced by the carbonic acid— a gas fatal to life. There were two things to be done then— first, to replace the absorbed oxygen; secondly, to destroy the expired carbonic acid; both easy enough to do, by means of chlorate of potassium and caustic potash. The former is a salt which appears under the form of white crystals; when raised to a temperature of 400 degrees it is transformed into chlorure of potassium, and the oxygen which it contains is entirely liberated. Now twenty-eight pounds of chlorate of potassium produces seven pounds of oxygen, or 2,400 litres— the quantity necessary for the travelers during twenty-four hours.

Caustic potash has a great affinity for carbonic acid; and it is sufficient to shake it in order for it to seize upon the acid and form bicarbonate of potassium. By these two means they would be enabled to restore to the vitiated air its life- supporting properties.

It is necessary, however, to add that the experiments had hitherto been made *in anima vili*. Whatever its scientific accuracy was, they were at present ignorant how it would answer with human beings. The honor of putting it to the proof was energetically claimed by J. T. Maston.

"Since I am not to go," said the brave artillerist, "I may at least live for a week in the projectile."

It would have been hard to refuse him; so they consented to his wish. A sufficient quantity of chlorate of potassium and of caustic potash was placed at his disposal, together with provisions for eight days. And having shaken hands with his friends, on the 12th of November, at six o'clock A.M., after strictly informing them not to open his prison before the 20th, at six o'clock P.M., he slid down the projectile, the plate of which was at once hermetically sealed. What did he do with himself during that week? They could get no information. The thickness of the walls of the projectile prevented any sound reaching from the inside to the outside. On the 20th of November, at six P.M. exactly, the plate was opened. The friends of J. T. Maston had been all along in a state of much anxiety; but they were promptly reassured on hearing a jolly voice shouting a boisterous hurrah.

Presently afterward the secretary of the Gun Club appeared at the top of the cone in a triumphant attitude. He had grown fat!

[. . .]

That very night, the startling news so impatiently awaited, burst like a thunderbolt over the United States of the Union, and thence, darting across the ocean, ran through all the telegraphic wires of the globe. The projectile had been detected, thanks to the gigantic reflector of Long's Peak! Here is the note received by the director of the Observatory of Cambridge. It contains the scientific conclusion regarding this great experiment of the Gun Club.

LONG'S PEAK, December 12. To the Officers of the Observatory of Cambridge. The projectile discharged by the Columbiad at Stones Hill has been detected by Messrs. Belfast and J. T. Maston, 12th of December, at 8:47 P.M., the moon having entered her last quarter. This projectile has not arrived at its destination. It has passed by the side; but sufficiently near to be retained by the lunar attraction.

The rectilinear movement has thus become changed into a circular motion of extreme velocity, and it is now pursuing an elliptical orbit round the moon, of which it has become a true satellite.

The elements of this new star we have as yet been unable to determine; we do not yet know the velocity of its passage. The distance which separates it from the surface of the moon may be estimated at about 2,855 miles.

However, two hypotheses come here into our consideration.

- 1. Either the attraction of the moon will end by drawing them into itself, and the travelers will attain their destination; or,*
- 2. The projectile, following an immutable law, will continue to gravitate round the moon till the end of time.*

At some future time, our observations will be able to determine this point, but till then the experiment of the Gun Club can have no other result than to have provided our solar system with a new star. J. BELFAST.

To how many questions did this unexpected *dénouement* give rise? What mysterious results was the future reserving for the

investigation of science? At all events, the names of Nicholl, Barbicane, and Michel Ardan were certain to be immortalized in the annals of astronomy!

When the dispatch from Long's Peak had once become known, there was but one universal feeling of surprise and alarm. Was it possible to go to the aid of these bold travelers? No! for they had placed themselves beyond the pale of humanity, by crossing the limits imposed by the Creator on his earthly creatures. They had air enough for *two* months; they had victuals enough for *twelve*;— *but after that?* There was only one man who would not admit that the situation was desperate— he alone had confidence; and that was their devoted friend J. T. Maston.

Besides, he never let them get out of sight. His home was henceforth the post at Long's Peak; his horizon, the mirror of that immense reflector. As soon as the moon rose above the horizon, he immediately caught her in the field of the telescope; he never let her go for an instant out of his sight, and followed her assiduously in her course through the stellar spaces. He watched with untiring patience the passage of the projectile across her silvery disc, and really the worthy man remained in perpetual communication with his three friends, whom he did not despair of seeing again some day.

"Those three men," said he, "have carried into space all the resources of art, science, and industry. With that, one can do anything; and you will see that, some day, they will come out all right."

from Jules Verne, Around the Moon, 1870

"My friend," said Barbicane, "if the moon is inhabited, its inhabitants must have appeared some thousands of years before those of the earth, for we cannot doubt that their star is much older than ours. If then these Selenites have existed their hundreds of thousands of years, and if their brain is of the same organization of the human brain, they have already invented all that we have invented, and even what we may invent in future ages. They have nothing to learn from *us*, and we have everything to learn from *them*."

"What!" said Michel; "you believe that they have artists like Phidias, Michael Angelo, or Raphael?"

"Yes."

"Poets like Homer, Virgil, Milton, Lamartine, and Hugo?"

"I am sure of it."

"Philosophers like Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Kant?"

"I have no doubt of it."

"Scientific men like Archimedes, Euclid, Pascal, Newton?"

"I could swear it."

"Comic writers like Arnal, and photographers like— like Nadar?"

"Certain."

[. . .]

Immediately a good-sized pie was given to the dog, which devoured it hungrily.

"Do you see, Barbicane," said Michel, "we should have made a second Noah's ark of this projectile, and borne with us to the moon a couple of every kind of domestic animal."

"I dare say; but room would have failed us."

"Oh!" said Michel, "we might have squeezed a little."

"The fact is," replied Nicholl, "that cows, bulls, and horses, and all ruminants, would have been very useful on the lunar continent, but unfortunately the car could neither have been made a stable nor a shed."

"Well, we might have at least brought a donkey, only a little donkey; that courageous beast which old Silenus loved to mount. I love those old donkeys; they are the least favored animals in creation; they are not only beaten while alive, but even after they are dead."

"How do you make that out?" asked Barbicane. "Why," said Michel, "they make their skins into drums."

Barbicane and Nicholl could not help laughing at this ridiculous remark. But a cry from their merry companion stopped them. The latter was leaning over the spot where Satellite lay. He rose, saying:

"My good Satellite is no longer ill."

"Ah!" said Nicholl.

"No," answered Michel, "he is dead! There," added he, in a piteous tone, "that is embarrassing. I much fear, my poor Diana, that you will leave no progeny in the lunar regions!"

Indeed the unfortunate Satellite had not survived its wound. It was quite dead. Michel Ardan looked at his friends with a rueful countenance.

"One question presents itself," said Barbicane. "We cannot keep the dead body of this dog with us for the next forty-eight hours."

"No! certainly not," replied Nicholl; "but our scuttles are fixed on hinges; they can be let down. We will open one, and throw the body out into space."

The president thought for some moments, and then said:

"Yes, we must do so, but at the same time taking very great precautions."

"Why?" asked Michel.

"For two reasons which you will understand," answered Barbicane. "The first relates to the air shut up in the projectile, and of which we must lose as little as possible."

"But we manufacture the air?"

"Only in part. We make only the oxygen, my worthy Michel; and with regard to that, we must watch that the apparatus does not

furnish the oxygen in too great a quantity; for an excess would bring us very serious physiological troubles. But if we make the oxygen, we do not make the azote, that medium which the lungs do not absorb, and which ought to remain intact; and that azote will escape rapidly through the open scuttles."

"Oh! the time for throwing out poor Satellite?" said Michel.

"Agreed; but we must act quickly."

"And the second reason?" asked Michel.

"The second reason is that we must not let the outer cold, which is excessive, penetrate the projectile or we shall be frozen to death."

"But the sun?"

"The sun warms our projectile, which absorbs its rays; but it does not warm the vacuum in which we are floating at this moment. Where there is no air, there is no more heat than diffused light; and the same with darkness; it is cold where the sun's rays do not strike direct. This temperature is only the temperature produced by the radiation of the stars; that is to say, what the terrestrial globe would undergo if the sun disappeared one day."

"Which is not to be feared," replied Nicholl.

"Who knows?" said Michel Ardan. "But, in admitting that the sun does not go out, might it not happen that the earth might move away from it?"

"There!" said Barbicane, "there is Michel with his ideas."

"And," continued Michel, "do we not know that in 1861 the earth passed through the tail of a comet? Or let us suppose a comet whose power of attraction is greater than that of the sun. The terrestrial orbit will bend toward the wandering star, and the earth, becoming its satellite, will be drawn such a distance that the rays of the sun will have no action on its surface."

"That *might* happen, indeed," replied Barbicane, "but the consequences of such a displacement need not be so formidable as you suppose."

"And why not?"



The interior of the space capsule, with the doomed dog, named Satellite

"Because the heat and cold would be equalized on our globe. It has been calculated that, had our earth been carried along in its course by the comet of 1861, at its perihelion, that is, its nearest approach to the sun, it would have undergone a heat 28,000 times greater than that of summer. But this heat, which is sufficient to evaporate the waters, would have formed a thick ring of cloud, which would have modified that excessive

temperature; hence the compensation between the cold of the aphelion and the heat of the perihelion."

"At how many degrees," asked Nicholl, "is the temperature of the planetary spaces estimated?"

"Formerly," replied Barbicane, "it was greatly exaggerated; but now, after the calculations of Fourier, of the French Academy of Science, it is not supposed to exceed 60 Centigrade below zero."

"Pooh!" said Michel, "that's nothing!"

"It is very much," replied Barbicane; "the temperature which was observed in the polar regions, at Melville Island and Fort Reliance, that is 76 Fahrenheit below zero."

"If I mistake not," said Nicholl, "M. Pouillet, another savant, estimates the temperature of space at 250 Fahrenheit below zero. We shall, however, be able to verify these calculations for ourselves."

"Not at present; because the solar rays, beating directly upon our thermometer, would give, on the contrary, a very high temperature. But, when we arrive in the moon, during its fifteen days of night at either face, we shall have leisure to make the experiment, for our satellite lies in a vacuum."

"What do you mean by a vacuum?" asked Michel. "Is it perfectly such?"

"It is absolutely void of air."

"And is the air replaced by nothing whatever?"

"By the ether only," replied Barbicane.

"And pray what is the ether?"

"The ether, my friend, is an agglomeration of imponderable atoms, which, relatively to their dimensions, are as far removed from each other as the celestial bodies are in space. It is these atoms which, by their vibratory motion, produce both light and heat in the universe."

They now proceeded to the burial of Satellite. They had merely to drop him into space, in the same way that sailors drop a body into the sea; but, as President Barbicane suggested, they must act quickly, so as to lose as little as possible of that air whose elasticity would rapidly have spread it into space. The bolts of the right scuttle, the opening of which measured about twelve inches across, were carefully drawn, while Michel, quite grieved, prepared to launch his dog into space. The glass, raised by a powerful lever, which enabled it to overcome the pressure of the inside air on the walls of the projectile, turned rapidly on its hinges, and Satellite was thrown out. Scarcely a particle of air could have escaped, and the operation was so successful that later on Barbicane did not fear to dispose of the rubbish which encumbered the car.

* * *

Naturalism

From Émile Zola, *Germinal*, 1885

While Realist writers such as Balzac, Champfleury, Claretie, and Flaubert had developed a form of fiction that rejected Romanticist excess and grotesquerie in order to observe and record contemporary, everyday life, they remained subject to aspects of Romanticist sentiment and other aspects of style. Emile Zola reconsidered the Realist project in the light of Positivism, and set out to use the novel as a form of social science; he called this new approach Naturalism. Comparing the novel to a chemical experiment, in which the



Emile Zola

*writer combined certain substances in order to see what would result, he spent months of intensive research for every novel, intending his total body of work to provide a comprehensive analysis of French society. For *Germinal*—which tells the story of a Mining Strike in the French provinces—he toured an operating mine-shaft, interviewed numerous workmen, foremen, capitalists, bureaucrats and soldiers, examined countless newspaper reports and statistical studies before beginning work on the text itself. Although often best-sellers, his books were usually decried in the press for moral or political subversion, and sometimes taken to court.*

The days followed each other; weeks, months glided by. Now, like his comrades, he rose at three o'clock, drank his coffee and went off, carrying his slice of bread and butter, which Madame Rasseneur had prepared for him the day before. Every morning on his way to the mine, he met old Bonnemort who was going home to rest, while, on leaving it, he met Bouteloup. He wore a blouse and breeches like his companions, and shivered with cold and warmed his back at the waiting room before the great fire. Then came the walk in bare feet; through the chilling air, to the superintendent's office. His attention was no longer attracted by the engine, shining out in the darkness with its copper and steel, the cables flying so silently, like birds in the night, the cages ceaselessly going up and down amid the uproar of the signals and the cars rolling over the flagging. His lamp burned badly, that confounded cleaner had not washed it; but he smiled good naturedly as Moquet slapped him on the back. The cage being unhooked, fell like a stone to the bottom of the shaft, without his even turning his head to see the daylight pass away. He had never thought such a fall possible, but he became more and more accustomed to that descent in the darkness under a beating shower. Below, in the main room, when Pierron had let them out with his air of hypocritical meekness there was stamping of feet as the miners went off, with lagging step, each to his own drift. He now knew the galleries of the mine better than the streets of Monston, knowing when to turn, when to stoop and where to avoid a stream of water. He had become so accustomed to these two kilometres under the ground that he could have walked without a lamp, his hands in his

pockets. Each day he met the same people in the passage; an overseer lighting up the faces of the workmen, old Moque leading a horse, Bebert driving Bataille who was snorting, Jeanlin running behind a train of cars to shut the ventilating doors, and little Lydie pushing her car.

[. . .]

As Etienne arrived at the saloon, a miner who was taking a drink, on his return from Montson, was telling the men that a notice was posted up in the cashier's room. But he could not read, so did not know what it was about. Man after man entered, each bringing a different story. It seemed, nevertheless, that they had all come to a resolution — a revolt was springing up.

"What do you say to it?" asked Etienne, sitting down to a table near Jouvarine, who, as usual, was smoking. The machinist went on with his cigarette.

It was easy to see they were going to try harsh measures. He was the only one with intelligence enough to analyze the situation. He explained in his quaint manner that the company, fearing a panic, were forced to reduce their expenses if they did not wish to go under, and naturally it was the salaries of the workmen which they would cut down first, under some pretense or other. The coal was not selling, nearly all the manufactories stood still. This saving fund was making the company uneasy; it was a threat for the future. A strike would clear it away while the funds were still low, and consequently they were trying to bring on that strike.

Easseneur had seated himself near Etienne, and both listened with an air of consternation. They were able to Speak in a loud voice. No one was there now but Madam Rasseneur, who was leaning on the bar.

"What an idea!" murmured the tavern keeper. "The company can make nothing from a strike, or the workmen either. The best thing is to understand each other."

[. . .]

All at once, a new cry arose.

"Bread! bread! bread!"

It was noon; the hunger of that six weeks strike had awakened as they ran across those fields. The small crust of bread, eaten in the morning, and the few chestnuts which Moquette had given the women, were not enough, and now hunger was added to their rage,

"To the mines! no more work! bread!"

Etienne, who had refused to eat his share that morning, began to feel a gnawing in his stomach. He did not complain, but every moment he took out his flask and swallowed a small quantity of gin. He was so weak that he could not have gone on without it. Then his cheeks began to burn and a flame lit up his eyes. But he kept his head; he still wished to avoid useless devastation.

As they reached the Joiselle road, a Vandame miner who had joined the band wanted to go to the right, and yelled:

"To Gaston-Marie! we must stop the pumps so that the water will flood Jean-Bart."

The enraged mob had already turned in spite of the appeals of Etienne, who implored them to let that alone. What good would it do to destroy the galleries? that roused his workingman's heart. Maheu also thought it unjust; but the miner still shouted, and Etienne, trying to drown his voice, screamed with all his might.

[. . .]

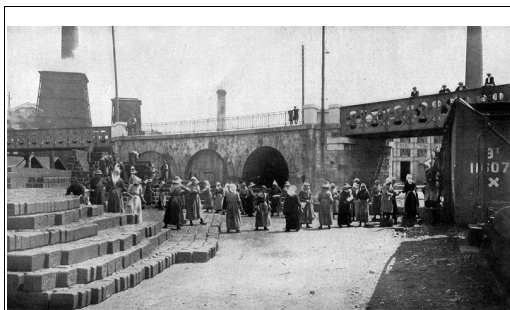
Etienne, who had emptied his flask, was able to refill it. Little by little a terrible intoxication, the intoxication of hunger had made his eyes blood shot, and, like a wolf, his teeth shone out between his pale lips. Suddenly he perceived that Cheval had run away in the midst of the tumult. He swore, and some of the men ran and brought back the fugitive, whom they found with Catherine concealed behind a lot of wood.

"So you're afraid of compromising yourself, are you? you rascal!" yelled Etienne. "In the forest didn't you speak of the engineers' strike and say it would stop the engines? And now you try to get out of our way? . . . "Well; we're going to return to Gaston-Marie, and you can break that engine yourself. Yes, you shall break it."

He was drunk, he turned himself and his men against the very engine which he had saved some hours before.

"To Gaston-Marie! to Gaston-Marie!"

Every one
applauded him, and
Cheval was seized by the
shoulders, dragged and
violently pushed along,
while he still asked that
he be allowed to wash.



*Female workers at a French coal mine around the
turn of the 20th Century*

"Go way now." cried Maheu to Catherine, who had again
begun to run.

She threw angry looks at her father and continued to run on.

The band again went over the smooth plain and then through
the long straight roads spreading out over the country. It was four
o'clock; the sun was going down, leaving upon the frozen ground the
shadows of the mob with their furious gestures.

[. . .]

"Bread! bread! bread!"

It was the strikers who were invading Montson, whilst the
gendarmes, believing in an attack on le Voreux, galloped, with their
backs turned, to occupy that mine. Exactly at the distance of two
kilometres from the first houses, a little below the meeting of the
highway and the road to Vandame, Madame Hennebeau and the
young ladies had just witnessed the passing of the band. The day at
Marchiennes had passed gaily; a pleasant breakfast at the house of
the director of les Forges; then an interesting visit to the workshops

and to the glass-works in the vicinity to fill up the afternoon; and, as they were returning at last in the clear evening light of a fine winter's day, Cécile was taken with a fancy to drink a cup of milk when passing near a little farm skirting the road. All then got out of the landau, Megrel gallantly jumping from his horse; while the peasant woman, bewildered by this gay company, rushed in saying she would spread a table-cloth before waiting on them. But Lucie and Jeanne wished to see the milking; they even went to the stable with their cups; they had a *partie champêtre* of it, laughing much at the litter in which they found themselves.

Madame Hennebeau, with her complacent matronly air, was drinking with the tips of her lips, when a strange noise outside made her uneasy.

"What is that?"

The stable, built on the edge of the road, had a large door for the carts, for it served at the same time as a barn for hay.

Already the young girls, stretching out their heads, were astonished as they distinguished to the left a black wave, a howling crowd streaming from the Vandame road.

[. . .]

"Take your smelling bottles, the riff-raff of the people are passing," said Megrel, whose republican proclivities induced him to jest with the ladies about the canaille.

But his joke was lost like a straw in the whirlwind of gesticulations and cries. The women had appeared; nearly a thousand women, with streaming hair, disheveled by the race, in rags showing the bare skin, half naked women tired of giving birth to children only to see them die of hunger. Some held their little ones in their arms; raised them; waved them about like a flag of mourning and vengeance. Others, younger, with the swollen throats of warriors, brandished sticks; while the old ones, frightful-looking, howled so loud that the cords of their scraggy necks seemed to be breaking. Then the men streamed along; two thousand furious men, errand-boys, miners, repairers, a compact mass rolling on in a single serried column, crowded together in such a manner that neither the faded breeches nor the old woolen jackets could be distinguished, all being uniform in the blackness of dirt. Their eyes were burning, the openings only of their dark mouths were seen, singing the Marseillaise, the verses being lost in a confused roar, accompanied by the clattering of their sabots on the hard ground. Over the heads of the people was carried on high an axe, as the standard of the people, and in the clear heavens the sharp blade shone out like a guillotine.

"What atrocious faces!" said Madame Hennebeau with a shudder.

Megrel forced himself to laugh again; but even he was growing frightened. He muttered between his closed teeth:

"The devil take me if I know one of them. Where do these ruffians come from?"

And in reality, rage, hunger, these months of suffering and the mad tramps around the mines, had extended their jaws like beasts, entirely changing the once placid faces of the coal men of Montson. The sun was setting; the last rays of a sombre red illumined the plain. The road seemed filled with blood and the women and men continued to pass, dyed like butchers in the midst of slaughter,

"Oh! it is superb!" said Lucie and Jeanne in a low voice, their artists' taste aroused by that horrible splendor.

Still, they trembled; they stepped back near Mme. Hennebeau, who had become so weak that she laid down upon a trough. The thought that only a look through the cracked door would be enough for them all to be slaughtered, made her shiver. Megrel felt himself growing pule; though ordinarily courageous, he was now seized with a fright superior to his will. Cécile, still in the hay, never moved. And the others, in spite of their desire to turn away their eyes, could not do so and still kept on looking.

It was the red morn of a revolution which will carry all before it in a bloody night before the end of the century. Yes, one evening the people let loose, unbridled, will run thus on the roads and spill the blood of the citizens; they will carry their heads on poles and scatter the gold from their safes. The women will shriek; the men will have their wolf-like jaws open to bite. Yes, there would be the same rags, the same thunder of heavy shoes, the same terrible crowd of dirty skins and infected breaths, killing the old people in their savage pushing. Houses would be burned; not a wall of the cities would remain; they would return to to the wild life of the woods after great

feasting; when the poor in the night would beat down the women and empty the cellars of the rich. There would be nothing left — not a cent — of the great fortunes; it would be like a new land. Yes, it was these things which passed on the road like a force of nature, and they received the terrible truth in their faces.

[. . .]

"Leave!" repeated the captain, in loud tones. "I have nothing to hear; I am ordered to guard the shaft; I will guard it. And don't push against my men, or we'll make you draw back."

In spite of the firmness of his voice, he paled with increasing anxiety at the sight of the constantly swelling crowd of miners. He was to be relieved at noon, and, fearing that he could not hold out till then, he had just sent a boy from the mines to Montsou, asking for reinforcements.

Shouts replied to him:

"Death to the strangers! Death to the Borains! We are the masters here."

Etienne retreated in despair. It was the end; nothing remained but to fight and to die. And he ceased to restrain his comrades; the band pressed on as far as the little troop. They numbered nearly four hundred already; the neighboring alleys were emptying themselves, the men arriving at racing speed. All uttered the same cry, Maheu and Levaque repeating furiously to the soldiers:

"Be off! We have nothing against you; be off!"

"This does not concern you," said la Maheu,

"Let us settle our own affairs."

And behind her, la Levaque added more violently:

"Must we cut you to get past? We beg you to break up your camp."

Even the shrill voice of Lydie, who, with Bebert, had forced herself into the thickest of the crowd, was heard, saying in a sharp tone:

"Look at the fools!"

[. . .]

Then the others joined her in a stream of insults. A few still cried; "Long live the soldiers! To the shaft with the officer!" But soon there was but one cry: "Down with the red pantaloons!"

The men who had listened impassively, with faces dumb and motionless, to the appeals to fraternity, the friendly attempts at seduction, preserved the same passive stiffness under this hail of insults. Behind them the captain had drawn his sword, and as the crowd pressed them more and more, threatening to crush them against the wall, he commanded them to charge bayonets. They obeyed; a double row of steel points were lowered before the breasts of the strikers.

"Ah! The devils," roared old Brule, drawing back.

Already all were returning, in exalted defiance of death. Women rushed on with the men, la Maheu and la Levaque saying:

"Do kill us! Do kill us, then! We want our rights."

At the risk of cutting himself, Levaque had seized with both hands a cluster of bayonets, three bayonets, which he shook and dragged towards him, to snatch them away; he twisted them, with strength doubled by his anger, while Bouteloup, at one side, weary of following this comrade, looked on calmly.

"Here!" said Maheu. "Here, if you're good fellows!" and he opened his vest, pushing aside his shirt, showing his naked breast, the flesh hairy and tattooed with coal. He pushed against the points, he compelled them to draw back, terrible with his firmness and bravery.

One of them pricked his chest; he rejoiced at it and tried to have it pierce deeper so as to hear his ribs crack.

"Cowards, you dare not. . . . There are ten thousand behind us. Yes, you can kill us, there will be ten thousand more to kill still."

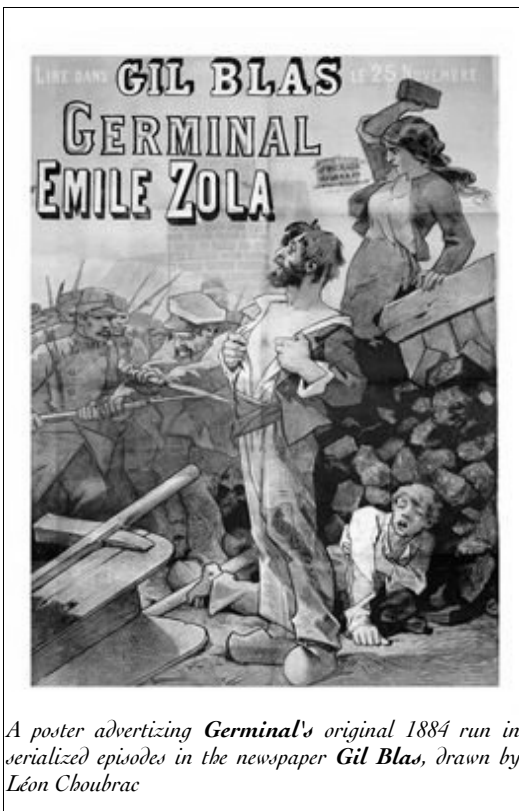
The position of the soldiers was becoming critical, for they had been strictly forbidden by their captain to use their arms only in the last extremity. And how were those enraged creatures there to be prevented from spitting themselves? On the other side, the space constantly diminished, they found themselves now driven against the wall without the possibility of retreating any more. Their little squad, a mere handful of men, in front of the swelling tide of the miners, held their own notwithstanding, executing with coolness the brief orders issued by the captain. He, with clear eyes and lips nervously

pressed together, had but one fear, that of seeing them exasperated at last by the insults. Already, a young sergeant, a lean little fellow, whose mustache of four hairs bristled, worked his eyelids in an uneasy manner. Near him an old soldier, tanned like leather by twenty campaigns, had turned pale when he saw his bayonet twisted like a straw. Another, a recruit doubtless, fresh from labor, turned red every time he heard them called rascals and debauchees. And the violence did not cease, extended fists, abominable words, peltings, menaces, and accusations were flung full in the face. It needed all the strength of discipline to hold them thus, with mute faces, in the

haughty and sad silence of military orders. A collision appeared unavoidable, when the overseer, Richomme, was suddenly seen to come out behind the troops, violently moving he spoke aloud:

"My God, what a stupid end this is! We must not permit such nonsense."

He threw himself between the bayonets and the miners.



*A poster advertizing **Germinal's** original 1884 run in serialized episodes in the newspaper **Gil Blas**, drawn by Léon Choubrac*

"Comrades, listen to me. . . . You know that I am an old workman, and that I have never ceased to be one of you. Well, in God's name, I promise you that if you are not treated justly, it is I who will tell the chiefs the truth. . . . But this is too much, it does no good slinging bad words at these worthy folks, and wanting to have a hole made in one's body."

[. . .]

Under this shower of stones, the little troop was disappearing. Fortunately, nearly all struck too high; the wall was shattered by them. What was to be done? The idea of going in again, of turning his back, flushed the captain's pale face for an instant; but it was no longer possible; they would be cut to pieces at the slightest movement. A brick had just struck the visor of his kepi; drops of blood ran from his forehead. Several of his men were already wounded, and he felt they were getting beyond his control from the ungovernable instinct of personal defense when the orders of the chief are no longer obeyed. The little sergeant had uttered a cry to God! his right shoulder half disjointed, the flesh bruised by a heavy crash like the blow of the beetle in a laundry. Three times already the recruit had been scratched; his right hand was bleeding, a bruise tortured his right knee. Were they to remain in this position any longer? Near him the old Cheveonne was biting his lips in a last struggle for patience, when a stone rebounded and struck him in the stomach; his tanned cheeks turned green, his gun shook and was stretched out at the end of his thin arms. Twice the captain was on the point of ordering them to fire. Anguish choked him; the internal

combat of a few seconds was confusing his ideas of duty; all his creeds as a man and as a soldier. The hail of bricks redoubled, and he was opening his mouth to give the order to "Fire!" when the guns were discharged themselves — three shots at first, then five, then the roll of a volley, then a single shot, a long time after in the utter silence. A stupor followed; they had fired, the gaping crowd remained motionless, not yet believing it. But piercing screams arose, whilst the trumpet sounded the order to cease firing. A crazy panic followed, a race like that of cattle fired upon, lost in the flight through the mud.

Bebert and Lydie had fallen, one on the top of the other, at the first three shots; the little girl struck in the face, the little boy under the left shoulder. She, thunderstruck, did not move again; but he, stirring, seized her with both hands in the convulsions of death; as if he wished to embrace her again as he had embraced her at the bottom of the dark hiding-place, where they had just passed their last night. And Jeanlin, just arrived at a run from Requillart bloated with sleep, jumping in the midst of the smoke, saw him embrace his little wife and die.

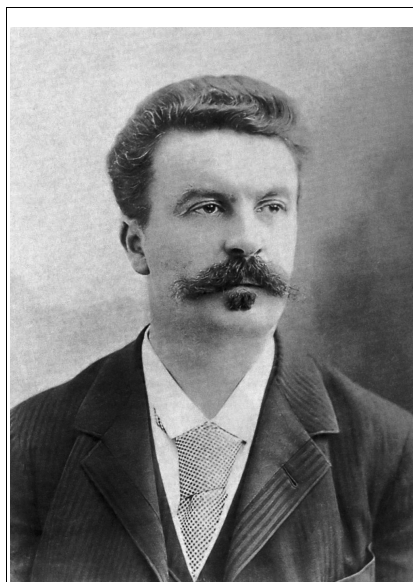
The other five shots had laid low Brule and the overseer, Richomme, struck in the back at the moment he was supplicating his comrades, he had fallen on his knees; and slipping on his hip, he gave the death rattle on the ground, his eyes filled with the tears he had shed. The old woman, with open throat had been stricken down all stiff and cracking like a fagot of dead wood, her last oath strangled by the spouting blood. But then the firing of the volley swept the ground, mowing down, at a hundred paces, the group of curiosity

seekers who were laughing at the battle. A ball entered Mouquet's mouth, knocking him over, shattered, at the feet of Zacharie and Philomène, whose two brats were covered with red drops. At the same instant Moquette received two balls in her stomach. She had seen the soldiers shoulder arms; she had thrown herself, by the instinctive movement of a good girl, before Catherine, calling out to her to take care, and she uttered a great cry, stretched on her back, overthrown by the shock. Etienne ran to her and wished to raise her and carry her away, but with a gesture she said that she was finished. Then there was a rattling in her throat, without her ceasing to smile at both of them, as if happy to see them together now that she was going away.

* * *

Guy de Maupassant, *The*
Colonel's Ideas

While Zola represented the intellectual, controversial embodiment of Naturalism, the even more popular Guy de Maupassant merged the approach with the genre of military historical fiction, popular since the early days of Romanticism. The Franco-Prussian War often served as the vehicle of Maupassant's Naturalism, whether



Guy de Maupassant in 1888, by Nadar

foregrounded in tales of military adventure or in the backdrop of closely-observed civilian scenes. While Zola attempted to synthesize comprehensive pictures of social relations in sweeping novels, Maupassant preferred to examine social relationships and hypocrisies in the form of short stories portraying open-ended slices of life.

"Upon my word," said Colonel Laporte, "although I am old and gouty, my legs as stiff as two pieces of wood, yet if a pretty woman were to tell me to go through the eye of a needle, I believe I should take a jump at it, like a clown through a hoop. I shall die like that; it is in the blood. I am an old beau, one of the old school, and the sight of a woman, a pretty woman, stirs me to the tips of my toes. There!

"We are all very much alike in France in this respect; we still remain knights, knights of love and fortune, since God has been abolished whose bodyguard we really were. But nobody can ever get woman out of our hearts; there she is, and there she will remain, and we love her, and shall continue to love her, and go on committing all kinds of follies on her account as long as there is a France on the map of Europe; and even if France were to be wiped off the map, there would always be Frenchmen left.

"When I am in the presence of a woman, of a pretty woman, I feel capable of anything. By Jove! When I feel her looks penetrating me, her confounded looks which set your blood on fire, I should like to do I don't know what; to fight a duel, to have a row, to smash the furniture, in order to show that I am the strongest, the bravest, the most daring and the most devoted of men.

"But I am not the only one, certainly not; the whole French army is like me, I swear to you. From the common soldier to the general, we all start out, from the van to the rear guard, when there is a woman in the case, a pretty woman. Do you remember what Joan of Arc made us do formerly? Come. I will make a bet that if a pretty woman had taken command of the army on the eve of Sedan, when Marshal MacMahon was wounded, we should have broken through the Prussian lines, by Jove! And had a drink out of their guns.

"It was not a [General] Trochu, but a Sainte-Genevieve, who was needed in Paris; and I remember a little anecdote of the war which proves that we are capable of everything in presence of a woman.

"I was a captain, a simple captain, at the time, and I was in command of a detachment of scouts, who were retreating through a district which swarmed with Prussians. We were surrounded, pursued, tired out and half dead with fatigue and hunger, but we were bound to reach Bar-sur-Tain before the morrow, otherwise we should be shot, cut down, massacred. I do not know how we managed to escape so far. However, we had ten leagues to go during the night, ten leagues through the night, ten leagues through the snow, and with empty stomachs, and I thought to myself:

"It is all over; my poor devils of fellows will never be able to do it.'

"We had eaten nothing since the day before, and the whole day long we remained hidden in a barn, huddled close together, so as

not to feel the cold so much, unable to speak or even move, and sleeping by fits and starts, as one does when worn out with fatigue.

"It was dark by five o'clock, that wan darkness of the snow, and I shook my men. Some of them would not get up; they were almost incapable of moving or of standing upright; their joints were stiff from cold and hunger.

"Before us there was a large expanse of flat, bare country; the snow was still falling like a curtain, in large, white flakes, which concealed everything under a thick, frozen coverlet, a coverlet of frozen wool. One might have thought that it was the end of the world.

"Come, my lads, let us start.'

"They looked at the thick white flakes that were coming down, and they seemed to think: 'We have had enough of this; we may just as well die here!' Then I took out my revolver and said:

"I will shoot the first man who flinches.' And so they set off, but very slowly, like men whose legs were of very little use to them, and I sent four of them three hundred yards ahead to scout, and the others followed pell-mell, walking at random and without any order. I put the strongest in the rear, with orders to quicken the pace of the sluggards with the points of their bayonets in the back.

"The snow seemed as if it were going to bury us alive; it powdered our kepis and cloaks without melting, and made phantoms of us, a kind of spectres of dead, weary soldiers. I said to myself: 'We shall never get out of this except by a miracle.'

"Sometimes we had to stop for a few minutes, on account of those who could not follow us, and then we heard nothing except the falling snow, that vague, almost indiscernible sound made by the falling flakes. Some of the men shook themselves, others did not move, and so I gave the order to set off again. They shouldered their rifles, and with weary feet we resumed our march, when suddenly the scouts fell back. Something had alarmed them; they had heard voices in front of them. I sent forward six men and a sergeant and waited.

"All at once a shrill cry, a woman's cry, pierced through the heavy silence of the snow, and in a few minutes they brought back two prisoners, an old man and a girl, whom I questioned in a low voice. They were escaping from the Prussians, who had occupied their house during the evening and had got drunk. The father was alarmed on his daughter's account, and, without even telling their servants, they had made their escape in the darkness. I saw immediately that they belonged to the better class. I invited them to accompany us, and we started off again, the old man who knew the road acting as our guide.

"It had ceased snowing, the stars appeared and the cold became intense. The girl, who was leaning on her father's arm, walked unsteadily as though in pain, and several times she murmured:

"'I have no feeling at all in my feet'; and I suffered more than she did to see that poor little woman dragging herself like that through the snow. But suddenly she stopped and said:

"Father, I am so tired that I cannot go any further."

"The old man wanted to carry her, but he could not even lift her up, and she sank to the ground with a deep sigh. We all gathered round her, and, as for me, I stamped my foot in perplexity, not knowing what to do, and being unwilling to abandon that man and girl like that, when suddenly one of the soldiers, a Parisian whom they had nicknamed Pratique, said:

"Come, comrades, we must carry the young lady, otherwise we shall not show ourselves Frenchmen, confound it!"

"I really believe that I swore with pleasure.' That is very good of you, my children,' I said; 'and I will take my share of the burden.'

"We could indistinctly see, through the darkness, the trees of a little wood on the left. Several of the men went into it, and soon came back with a bundle of branches made into a litter.

"Who will lend his cape? It is for a pretty girl, comrades,' Pratique said, and ten cloaks were thrown to him. In a moment the girl was lying, warm and comfortable, among them, and was raised upon six shoulders. I placed myself at their head, on the right, well pleased with my position.

"We started off much more briskly, as if we had had a drink of wine, and I even heard some jokes. A woman is quite enough to electrify Frenchmen, you see. The soldiers, who had become cheerful and warm, had almost reformed their ranks, and an old 'franc-tireur' who was following the litter, waiting for his turn to replace the first of his comrades who might give out, said to one of his neighbors, loud

enough for me to hear: "I am not a young man now, but by —, there is nothing like the women to put courage into you!"

"We went on, almost without stopping, until three o'clock in the morning, when suddenly our scouts fell back once more, and soon the whole detachment showed nothing but a vague shadow on the ground, as the men lay on the snow. I gave my orders in a low voice, and heard the harsh, metallic sound of the cocking, of rifles. For there, in the middle of the plain, some strange object was moving about. It looked like some enormous animal running about, now stretching out like a serpent, now coiling itself into a ball, darting to the right, then to the left, then stopping, and presently starting off again. But presently that wandering shape came nearer, and I saw a dozen lancers at full gallop, one behind the other. They had lost their way and were trying to find it.

"They were so nearby that time that I could hear the loud breathing of their horses, the clinking of their swords and the creaking of their saddles, and cried: 'Fire!'

"Fifty rifle shots broke the stillness of the night, then there were four or five reports, and at last one single shot was heard, and when the smoke had cleared away, we saw that the twelve men and nine horses had fallen. Three of the animals were galloping away at a furious pace, and one of them was dragging the dead body of its rider, which rebounded violently from the ground; his foot had caught in the stirrup.

"One of the soldiers behind me gave a terrible laugh and said: 'There will be some widows there!'

"Perhaps he was married. A third added: 'It did not take long!'

"A head emerged from the litter.

"'What is the matter?' she asked; 'are you fighting?'

"'It is nothing, mademoiselle,' I replied; 'we have got rid of a dozen Prussians!'



A Prussian cavalry squadron in combat with French infantry

"'Poor fellows!' she said. But as she was cold, she quickly disappeared beneath the cloaks again, and we started off once more. We marched on for a long time, and at last the sky began to grow lighter. The snow became quite clear, luminous and glistening, and a rosy tint appeared in the east. Suddenly a voice in the distance cried:

"'Who goes there?'

"The whole detachment halted, and I advanced to give the countersign. We had reached the French lines, and, as my men defiled before the outpost, a commandant on horseback, whom I had informed of what had taken place, asked in a sonorous voice, as he saw the litter pass him: 'What have you in there?'

"And immediately a small head covered with light hair appeared, disheveled and smiling, and replied:

"It is I, monsieur."

"At this the men raised a hearty laugh, and we felt quite light-hearted, while Pratique, who was walking by the side of the litter, waved his kepi and shouted:

"Vive la France!" And I felt really affected. I do not know why, except that I thought it a pretty and gallant thing to say.

"It seemed to me as if we had just saved the whole of France and had done something that other men could not have done, something simple and really patriotic. I shall never forget that little face, you may be sure; and if I had to give my opinion about abolishing drums, trumpets and bugles, I should propose to replace them in every regiment by a pretty girl, and that would be even better than playing the 'Marseillaise: By Jove! It would put some spirit into a trooper to have a Madonna like that, a live Madonna, by the colonel's side."

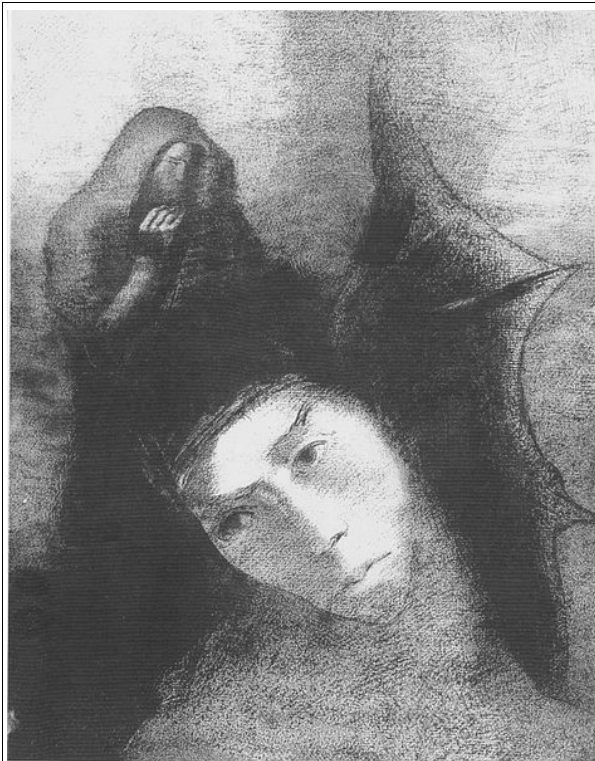
He was silent for a few moments and then continued, with an air of conviction, and nodding his head:

"All the same, we are very fond of women, we Frenchmen!"

* * *

Section 5:

The Avant-Garde Against Nature



*The Symbolist artist Odilon Redon's 1896 illustration to
The Temptation of Saint Anthony is captioned:*

*"What Is the Point of All This-
The Devil-There Is No Point!"*

As secularization and technological progress came to the forefront of French culture during the Third Republic, much the avant-garde devoted itself to questioning mainstream culture's values of pragmatism, common-sense, and self-evident truth. While Positivism proclaimed that Science was harnessing Nature for human purposes and making the world comprehensible at last after millennia of superstition, many in the avant-garde built upon the heritage of Dandyism and the Cult of Art to argue the opposite: humanity is defined by our alienation from Nature, and modern science has not eliminated ambiguity or mystery: it has simply relocated it from the realm of myth to the realm of our own psychologies. The unknowable was to be found within us.

from Remy de Gourmont, The Dissociation of Ideas, 1899

Remy de Gourmont was, along with Stéphane Mallarmé, the most influential avant-garde theorist of his generation. He was intensely concerned with the relationships between language, the body, consciousness, and civilization; and his theoretical work combined elements of linguistics, psychology, biology, philosophy, historiography, theology, and sociology. Central to his project was the method he called the Dissociation of Ideas: positing that virtually all of consciousness is shaped by the categories and ideas established by society to organize our perceptions and experiences, he set out to examine how these social ideas operate on us, how they have changed and merged through the centuries, and how they can be alchemically manipulated to create new forms of thought.

These are two ways of thinking. One can either accept current ideas and associations of ideas, just as they are, or undertake, on his own account, new associations or, what is rarer, original disassociations. The intelligence capable of such efforts is, more or less, according to the degree, or according to the abundance and variety of its other gifts, a creative intelligence. It is a question either of inventing new relations between old ideas, old images, or of separating old ideas, old images united by tradition, of considering them one by one, free to work them over and arrange an infinite number of new couples which a fresh operation will disunite once more, and so on till new ties, always fragile and doubtful, are formed.

In the realm of facts and of experience such operations would necessarily be limited by the resistance of matter and the

uncompromising character of physical laws. In the purely intellectual domain they are subject to logic; but logic itself being an intellectual fabric, its indulgence is almost unlimited. In truth, the association and the disassociation of ideas (or of images, for the idea is merely a worn-out image) pursue a winding course which it is impossible to determine, and whose general direction, even, it is difficult to follow. There are no ideas so remote no image so ill-assorted, that an easy habit of association can bring them together, at least, momentarily.

[. . .]

Deprived of the truth contained in commonplaces, men would be without defense, without support, and without nourishment. They have so great a need of truths that they adopt new ones without rejecting the old. Civilized man's brain is a museum of contradictory truths. This does not disturb him because he is a 'successive'. He ruminates his truths one after the other. He thinks as he eats. We should vomit with horror if we had presented to us, in a large dish, the various aliments, from meat to fruit, mixed with soup, wine and coffee, destined to form our 'successive' repast. Our horror would be as great were we shown the repellent amalgam of contradictory truths which find lodgment in our mind. Some few analytical intelligences have sought vainly to draw up in cold blood the inventory of their contradictions. To each objection offered by reason, sentiment opposes an immediately valid excuse; for, as M. Ribot has pointed out, the sentiments are what is strongest in us, representing the elements of permanence and continuity. It is not less difficult to inventory the contradictions of others, where a single

individual is concerned; for here we come up against hypocrisy which has, precisely, as its social rôle, to dissimulate the too strident clash of our variegated convictions. We should then question all men—that is to say, the human entity—or at least groups of men sufficiently numerous for the cynicism of some to compensate the hypocrisy of others.

[. . .]

The secret purpose of the commonplace is, in fact, to express a truth. Isolated ideas represent merely facts or abstractions. To form a truth, two factors are needed—a fact and an abstraction. Such, at least, is the commonest mode of generation. Almost every truth, almost every commonplace, may be resolved into these two elements.

The word "truth" may almost always be employed concurrently with the word "commonplace", and is thus defined, once and for all, as a commonplace which has not yet been disassociated, disassociation being analogous to what, in chemistry, is called analysis. Chemical analysis challenges neither the existence nor the qualities of the substance which it disassociates into diverse elements often disassociable in their turn. It limits itself to liberating these elements and offering them to synthesis which, varying the proportions and adding new elements will, if it likes, obtain entirely different substances. With the fragments of a truth can be constructed another truth "identically contrary". Such a task would be a mere game, but useful, nevertheless, like all those exercises which limber the intelligence and lead it towards that state of disdainful nobility to which it should aspire.

[...]

An historical psychology of humanity could be attempted by determining the precise degree of disassociation attained, in the course of the centuries, by a certain number of those truths which the orthodox agree to call primordial. This method ought even to form the base, and this determination the very aim, of history. Since



Remy de Gourmont, pictured here by F. Maillaud in 1895, played a central role in the avant-garde as a publisher, theorist, archivist, and novelist.

everything in man comes back to the intelligence, everything in history ought to come back to psychology. It would be some excuse for the facts, were they found to admit of an explanation neither diplomatic nor strategic. What was the association of ideas or the truth not yet disassociated which favoured the accomplishment of the mission which Jeanne d'Arc believed to have been received from heaven? To answer this question it would be necessary to discover certain ideas capable of

uniting equally in French brains and in English, or a truth at that time indisputably admitted by all Christendom. Jeanne d'Arc was regarded, at once by her friends and by her enemies, as possessing a supernatural power. For the English, she was a very potent sorceress. Opinion is unanimous on this point and there is abundant evidence. But for her partisans? For them she was doubtless a sorceress also,

or rather, a magician. Magic is not necessarily diabolical. Supernatural beings, that were neither angels nor demons, but Powers which man's intelligence could bring under its dominion, were afloat in the imagination. The magician was the good sorcerer. Were this not so, would a man as wise and as saintly as Albertus Magnus have been taxed with magic? The soldier who followed Jeanne d'Arc, and the soldier who fought her, sorceress or magician, formed of her, quite probably, an idea identical in its dreadful absurdity. But if the English shouted the name of sorceress, the French withheld the name of 'magician', doubtless for the same reason which so long protected the usurper Ta-Kiang through the marvelous adventures narrated by Judith Gautier in her admirable *Dragon Impérial*.

What idea, at any given moment, did each class of society form of the soldier? Would not the answer to this question contain a whole course in history? Coming down to our own time, it might be asked at what moment the idea of honour and the military idea became united in the common mind. Is the union a survival of the aristocratic conception of the army? Was the association formed as a result of the events of thirty years ago, when the people decided to exalt the soldier for its own encouragement? This idea of honour should be clearly understood. It contains several other ideas — ideas of bravery, of disinterestedness, of discipline, of sacrifice, of heroism, of probity, of loyalty, of frankness, of good honour, of openness, of simplicity, etc. The word itself would, in fine, be found to sum up the qualities of which the French race believes itself to be the expression.

To determine its origin would be, then, to determine automatically the period when the Frenchman began to believe himself a compendium of all the manly virtues. The military man has remained in France, in spite of recent objections, the very type of the man of honour. The two ideas are united very energetically. They form a truth which is scarcely disputed to-day, except by individuals of slight authority or of doubtful sincerity. Its disassociation is, therefore, very little advanced as regards the nation as a whole. It was, however, for a moment at least, completely effected in certain minds. This involved, from the strictly intellectual point of view, a considerable effort of abstraction which we cannot but admire when we regard dispassionately the cerebral machine in its functioning. Doubtless the result achieved was not the product of normal reasoning. The disassociation was accomplished in a fit of fever. It was unconscious, and it was momentary; but it *was*, and that is the important point for the observer. The idea of honour, with all it implies, became separated from the military idea, which in this instance, is the factual idea, the female idea, ready to receive all the modifiers, and it was perceived that, if there was a certain logical relation between them, this relation was not necessary. There is the decisive point. A truth is dead when it has been shown that the relations between the elements are habitual, and not necessary; and, as the death of a truth is a great benefit for mankind, this disassociation would have been very important if it had been definitive, if it had remained stable. Unfortunately, after the effort to attain the pure idea, the old mental habits resumed their sway. The

former modifying element was instantly replaced by an element by no means new, less logical than the other, and even less necessary. The operation seemed to have miscarried. Association of ideas occurred again in the very same form as before. Though one of the elements had now been turned inside out, like an old glove. For honour had been substituted dishonour, with all the adventitious ideas belonging to the old element transformed into cowardice, deceitfulness, lack of discipline, falseness, duplicity, wickedness, etc. This new association of ideas may have a destructive value, but it offers no intellectual interest.

[. . .]

A notion, reaching the estate of idea, has become indisputable. It is a cipher, a sign — one of the letters in the alphabet of thought.

Ideas cannot be classed as true and false. The idea is necessarily true. An idea that can be disputed is an idea mingled with concrete notions, that is to say, a truth. The work of disassociation tends, precisely, to free the truth from all its fragile part, in order to obtain the pure, one, and consequently unassailable idea. But if words were never used save in their unique and absolute sense, connected discourse would be difficult. There must be left a little of that vagueness and flexibility which usage has given them; and, in particular, too much stress must not be laid upon the gap separating the abstract from the concrete. There is an intermediate state between ice and water—that in which the latter begins to congeal, when it still cracks and yields under the pressure of the hand plunged

into it. Perhaps we should not even demand that the words contained in philosophic handbooks should abdicate all pretension to ambiguity.

[. . .]

It is seen that there is often an enormous gap between the common meaning of a word and its real significance in the depths of obscure verbal consciousnesses, whether because several associated ideas are expressed by a single word, or because the primitive idea has been submerged by the invasion of a secondary idea. It is thus possible—especially in dealing with generalizations—to write sentences having at once an apparent and a secret meaning. Words, which are signs, are almost always ciphers as well. The unconscious conventional language is very much in use, and there are even matters where it is the only one employed. But cipher implies deciphering. It is not easy to understand even the sincerest writing, and the author himself often goes astray because the meaning of words varies not only from one man to another, but from moment to moment, in the case of the same man. Language is thus a great cause of deception. It evolves in abstraction, while life evolves in complete concrete reality. Between speech and the things designated by speech, there is the same distance as between a landscape and the description of a landscape. And it must still further be borne in mind that the landscapes which we depict are known to us, most often, only through words which are, in turn, reflections of anterior words. Yet we understand each other.

[. . .]

Thence the universal aversion to connecting the idea of nothingness with the idea of death. Though the former is evidently contained in the latter, humanity insists upon considering them separately. It opposes their union with all its force, never tiring of driving between them a chimerical wedge upon which resound the hammer-blows of hope. This is the finest example of the illogical that we can offer ourselves for our diversion, and the best proof that, in the gravest matters, as in those of slightest concern, it is sentiment which always triumphs over reason. Is it a great thing to have learned that? Perhaps.

Literature, Cognition, and Neuralgia

from Remy de Gourmont, *Subconscious Creation*, 1900

The unconscious had always been a central concern in the avant-garde, most obviously in the mysticism of Nerval and Bertrand (see Vol. 2) and the experiments of the Club des Haschischins (see Vol. 3). The avant-garde of the Third Republic examined the unconscious through the lens of the most recent scientific and psychological research on the nervous system, cognition, and the research of pre-Freudian psychologists such as Charcot. But whereas the latter approached the unconscious as symptomatic of pathology, the Symbolists, like the Surrealists forty years later, approached it as an impetus for new practices.

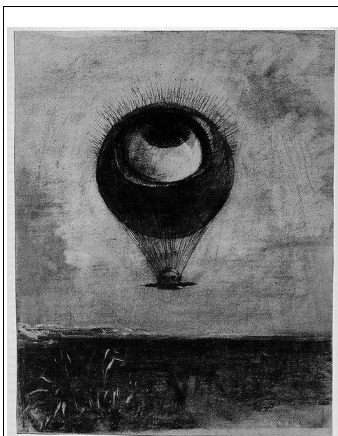
More practically, and from a totally different point of view, M. Chabaneix, having studied the continuous subconscious, divides it into nocturnal and waking sub-consciousness. If the former be a question of sleep or of the moments preceding sleep, it is oneiric or pre-oneiric. Maury, who was particularly afflicted by them, has

carefully considered the hallucinations which are formed the moment the eyes close in sleep. It is not clear that these hallucinations which are called hypnagogic, and which are almost always visual, can have a special influence on the ideas undergoing elaboration in the brain. They are rather embryonic dreams which influence the course of the thought only as dreams influence it. It happens, at times, that the conscious effort of the brain is prolonged during the dream, even reaching its goal there, and that, on awaking, the dreamer finds himself, without reflection or difficulty, master of a problem, a poem, a combination, which had baffled him previously. Burdach, a Koenigsberg professor, made, in his dreams, several physiological discoveries which he was afterwards able to verify. A dream was sometimes the point of departure for an undertaking. Sometimes a work was entirely conceived and executed during sleep. It is highly probable, however, that it is the conscious reason which, at the moment of awaking, judges and rectifies the dream spontaneously, gives it its true value, and divests it of that incoherence peculiar to all dreams, even the most rational.

[. . .]

If inspiration be a second state, it may, then, be a second state induced voluntarily. There is no doubt that artists, writers, scientists can work without preparation when obliged to, spurred on only by necessity, and that, on the other hand, the work thus produced is quite as good as that done entirely for its own sake. This does not mean that the subconscious has remained inactive during the effort initiated by the will, but that its activity has been induced. There is,

then, a subconscious state which is not spontaneous, which comes to mingle with the conscious when required by the will, but which, little by little, as the work progresses, substitutes itself for the will. It is often enough to set to work, in order to feel all the difficulties that had paralyzed effort vanish one by one; but perhaps this reasoning is paralogical, and the work has precisely become possible only because of the preliminary breaking-down of the obstacles which had confronted the mind in the first place. In either case, however, there is evident intervention of the subconscious forces.



The Symbolist painter Odilon Redon explored dream imagery as a window into the unconscious in much of his work, such as Eye Balloon from 1878

How does a sensation become an image, the image an idea? How does the idea develop? How does it assume the form which seems best to us? How, in writing, is contribution levied upon the verbal memory? These are all questions which seem to me insoluble, yet whose solution would be necessary in order to formulate a precise definition of inspiration.

* * *

from Max Nordau, *Degeneration*, 1892

Given the influence on the avant-garde of psychiatric research into pathology, it was perhaps inevitable that their work would be read as psychologically pathological, especially when it was focused on areas of life that mainstream society did not want

discussed. Though the Decadent and Symbolist communities were small subcultures and most of their work was virtually unknown, some gained public notoriety for their scandalous work and the lawsuits that often accompanied it. The result was that the community became a symbol for the degeneration of Western culture both for traditionalists and conservatives (who saw their 'depraved' subject matter and cultivated obsessions as evidence of social decay) and positivist progressives (who deplored their political resignation and insularity). The main spokesman for this attack on the avant-garde was Max Nordau. In this passage of his best-selling book attacking the Decadents, Nordau focuses like they do on the role of the nervous system in literature and art, distinguishing the pleasure of the bodily senses (which he argues the Decadents appeal to) to a beauty distinct from the senses. He comes, however, to a very different conclusion.

Everyone who has studied this subject in the least knows that two kinds of the beautiful are distinguished — the sensuously-beautiful and the intellectually-beautiful. We feel those phenomena to be beautiful, the sense-perception of which is accompanied by a feeling of pleasure — e.g. a particular colour, perhaps a pure red, or a harmony ; nay, even a single note with its severally indistinguishable but synchronous overtones. The researches of Helmholtz and Blasernaüt have thrown light on the cause of the feeling of pleasure connected with certain acoustic perceptions, while those of Brücke have led to similar results with regard to the mechanism of the feelings of pleasure following optical impressions. It is a question of discernment by the sensory nerves of definite simple numerical relations in the vibrations of matter or of ether. We know less concerning the causes of the pleasures connected with smell and

touch ; yet here also it seems to be a question of more or less strong impressions, hence equally of quantities, of numbers. The ultimate cause of all these feelings is that certain modes of vibrations are in accord with the structure of the nerves, are easy for them and leave them in order, while other modes disturb the arrangement of the nerve particles, often costing the nerves an effort, often dangerous to their existence or at least their functioning, to restore them to their natural order. The former will be felt as pleasure, the latter as discomfort, and even as pain. With the sensuously-beautiful there can be no question of morality, for it exists as perception only, and does not rise to the rank of representation.

* * *

from Théophile Gautier, *Charles Baudelaire*

By the 1880s, the avant-garde was pervaded with an extreme form of Dandyism in which the individual designed virtually every part of his or her personality, language, behavior, clothing, home, food, and even internal psychological habits. In England, the British avant-garde called this new movement Aestheticism, and gave it a character reminiscent of the Parnassians; in France it took a darker path, and for reasons we will discover came to be known as Decadence. In order to carry out this lifestyle of constant awareness and mental control, avant-gardists strove to train their nerves and perceptual apparatus to be ever more sensitive and discerning, and their brains to make more and more connections between ideas and their physical perceptions. But there was a cost: the mental and physical strain of this constant state of alertness and stress could become extreme, while many people lost the ability to 'turn off' this

hypersensitivity when they ventured into the streets of an urban environment which was becoming noisier, flashier, and busier every day. The result was a physiological condition of sensory and cognitive overload that they claimed was unique to the avant-garde, often called neurosis or 'neuralgia'. Those who had pioneered this practice during the 1850s and 60s, such as Gautier and Baudelaire, had already identified this phenomenon and warned the community of its dangers, as would later writers throughout the century. But very few—even those who made the warnings—gave these practices up.

The fears experienced by parents when the fatal gift of poesy manifests itself in a son, are, alas ! but too well-founded, and it is wrong, in my opinion, for writers of biographies to reproach fathers and mothers with lack of intelligence and with taking commonplace views of life. They are quite right, are the parents. For apart from pecuniary troubles, how sad, precarious, and wretched a life is that of the man who of his own free will enters upon the Way of Sorrows called a literary life ! From the moment he does so he may look upon himself as cut off from his fellow-men ; he ceases to act, to live ; he becomes a spectator of life. Every sensation he experiences has to be analysed by him ; involuntarily he separates his two selves, and when he lacks any other subject takes to spying upon himself. If he has no corpse at hand, he stretches himself out on the black marble table, and, by a prodigy of frequent occurrence in literature, drives the dissecting knife into his own heart.

[. . .]

Then what endless, obstinate struggles with ideas, difficult to grasp as Proteus, assuming every possible form to avoid being caught, and yielding up their meaning only when constrained to exhibit themselves under their true aspect ! And even when an idea has been seized and is held panting and breathless under one's knee, it has to be raised up again, clothed, indued with the robe of style, so difficult to weave, to dye, to arrange in graceful or in majestic folds. When this work is of long duration, the nerves become strung, the brain overheated, sensitiveness becomes over acute, and neurosis supervenes, attended by its train of mysterious uneasiness, insomnia, and hallucination, undefinable pains, morbid fancies, unreasoning enthusiasm, and motiveless antipathy, mad bursts of energy and utter prostration, thirst for stimulants and distaste for any healthy food. I am not exaggerating in any degree ; more than one recent death can testify to that.

* * *

Maurice Rollinat, *The Chamber: Ghosts*, 1883

*In 1883, Maurice Rollinat published **The Neuroses**, a book of aggressively Decadent verse whose very title evokes the Decadent fascination with unhealthy, unusual, or heightened psychological states. 'The Chamber' evokes a speaker in the grips of 'neuralgia', a state of awareness which is a reflection of a mental state, so intense as to cause physical pain.*

This room of mine my soul resembles ;
So sleep and death seem even as one :
No flame in the dull fireplace trembles !
On the dull window shines no sun !

A melancholy pattern covers
The gray walls of the sombre room,
And where the green blind's shadow hovers
It flecks, like verdigris, their gloom.

Above my pillow gazes ever
A Christ, with innocent looks unblamed,
Who seems in the dense shade to shiver,
As of his nakedness ashamed.

My fate has a funereal fellow.
For on the chimney-mantel lies
A broken skull, worn smooth and yellow,
That haunts me with his hollow eyes.

In heavy folds the ancient curtain
Clings round my bedstead like a pall ;
Fantastic creeping things uncertain
Athwart the ceiling dance and crawl.

When on my clock the hour comes knelling
It fills me with a wild dismay ;
Each loud pulsation, strangely swelling,
Lingers and slowly dies away.

The angel of my buried passion
Comes nightly, swathed in sable cloak,
And wails a dirge in ghostly fashion,
With tears that blind and sobs that choke.

Books, pictures, flowers seem phantoms risen
With poisonous airs from deepest hell,
And, like a shroud that wraps this prison,
Horror, that loves me, comes to dwell.

Sad chamber where, with mocking curses,
Care keeps her vigil day and night,
Along thy wall I write these verses
And love thee for thy black delight ;

For as the gulf the torrent pleases,
And dear is darkness to the owl,
So thou dost charm my soul's diseases
Because thou art so like my soul !

* * *

from Max Nordeau, *On Art and Artists*, 1907

The psychological roots of all artistic creation are, in fact, an exceptional sensitiveness and feeling on the part of the artist. We know that every moderately strong impression which man and, moreover, not only man, but also every living creature, however low in the scale receives from the external world, excites in him processes, which, in the case of man and the higher animals, attain consciousness as emotion or passion. The emotion imperiously urges in towards liberation through movements, that is to say, muscular activity, which, in many cases, is accompanied by glandular activity, e.g. tears, secretion of saliva, perspiration, etc. To men of the average

type the usual forms of manifesting their emotion suffice. If they have wept in sorrow, laughed for joy, cursed or clenched their fist in anger, they are pacified. Their emotion has spent itself and become exhausted, and their physical life once more flows in its accustomed channels.

However, if, instead of the average man, we have before us a creature of exceptional sensitiveness and emotionality, the psychical processes assume another shape. This creature feels all phenomena more acutely ; they arouse in him more violent passions ; his emotions are deeper and more lasting. Their normal forms of expression do not suffice to lull them. They take possession of his soul, organise themselves, show a tendency to become compelling ideas, and oppress it with psycho-motorial incitements or impulses until it has freed itself from them by acts which stand in proper ratio to the number or violence of the emotions. A being whose excessive emotionality is of an angry, malicious nature attains relief only through deeds of destruction. Such is the case with most sub-species of born criminals. Should the exceptionally strong emotions not be of a destructive nature, they find their outlet otherwise by artistic creations, which, therefore, are a liberation and solution of emotion that has become overmastering.

* * *

Decadence

The optimism of mainstream French society under the Third Republic was not shared by everybody. For some, it was a scientific myth that obscured the continuing social and economic injustices of Capitalism; for others, it represented the death of spirituality or beauty in favour of quantitative market-value; still others saw the principles of individuality being crushed by a homogenizing mass culture. As Positivism became the semi-official ideology, many in the avant-garde began to express dissent by declaring that society was actually not progressing, but entering its period of Decadence: experiencing the final spasm of luxury and self-delusion before the decline of European civilization. They pointed to the history of Rome's decline, the early stages of which were characterized by huge building projects, military expansion, lavish displays of wealth, and loosened moral codes. The symptoms of decay, they implied, could only be read in retrospect; at the time, Decadence had looked like Progress.

from Théophile Gautier, Charles Baudelaire

Like Nordau, most of the Decadents and Symbolists traced their own intellectual heritage through Baudelaire to Gautier. While Decadence was not treated as a central theme by either of them, they were among the first to re-examine the hierarchies inherent in the 'Idea' of Decadence (in Gourmont's sense), and to give it a positive value in much the same way as the Romanticists had done with the 'Idea' of Barbarianism;

and many of the leading writers first associated with the term had known and worked with both movements. They saw the decay of one civilization as providing the materials for the next, as Rome's decay had laid the groundwork for Medieval—and even Modern—civilization. Here Gautier discusses Baudelaire's relationship with Decadence, in a book-length memoir written after his friend's death.

It will be readily understood that the fourteen hundred words in Racine's vocabulary are not sufficient for an author who has undertaken to reproduce modern ideas and things in their infinite complexity and varied colouring. So Baudelaire, who was a good Latin scholar, in spite of his lack of success at his degree examinations, assuredly preferred Apuleius, Petronius, Juvenal, St. Augustine, and Tertullian, with his ebony black style, to Vergil and Cicero. He even resorted to ecclesiastical Latin, to the prose and the



*The Romans of the Decadence, by Thomas Couture,
1847*

hymns in which rime stands for the forgotten ancient rhythm, and under the title "Franciscae meae Laudes," addressed "to a modest and erudite milliner," for thus runs the dedication, a Latin

poem rimed in the ternary form, as Brizeux calls it, which is composed of three rimes following consecutively, instead of being alternated as in the Dantesque *terzetta*. To this curious poem is added

a no less curious note, which I transcribe, for it explains and corroborates what I have just said about the idioms of decadence:

"Does it not strike the reader, as it strikes me, that the tongue of the latest Latin decadence, the parting sigh of a robust being already transformed and prepared for spiritual life, is singularly well fitted to express passion in the way it has been understood and felt by the modern world? Mysticity is the other pole of the magnet of which Catullus and his followers, brutal poets who were superficial merely, knew only the sensual pole. The solecisms and barbarisms of that marvelous tongue seem to me to render the carelessness of a passion that forgets all restraint and mocks at regulations. The words, taken in a new sense, reveal the charming unskilfulness of the Northern barbarian kneeling before his Roman beauty. Have not even the puns, as they flash among the pedantic stammering, a look of childhood's shy, quaint grace?"

* * *

from Max Nordau, *Degeneration*, 1895

In this passage, Nordau makes clear the very different attitudes toward cultural change taken by Decadents and Positivists. While the Decadents saw the dissolution of Latin and its development into the various European Romance languages as a process of cultural evolution in which new forms of culture were opened up, Nordau—like most intellectuals since the early middle Ages—saw it purely in terms of the decay from the Classical standard.

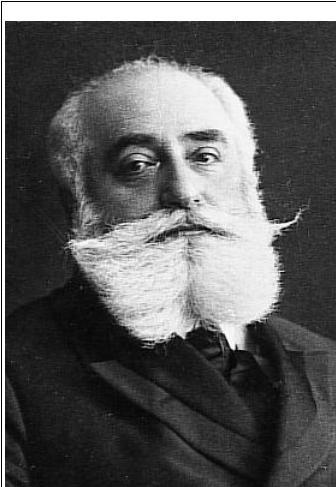
The school of Baudelaire reflects the character of its master, strangely distorted; it has become in some sort like a prism, which diffracts this light into its elementary rays. His delusion of anxiety (anxiomania), and his predilection for disease, death and putrefaction (necrophilia), have fallen, as we have seen in the preceding book, to the lot of M. Maurice Rollinat. M. Catulle Mendés has inherited his sexual aberrations and lasciviousness, and besides all the newer French pornographists rely upon them for proving the 'artistic *raison d'être*' of their depravity. Jean Richepin, in *La Chanson des Gueux*, has spied in him, and copied, his glorification of crime, and, further, in *Les Blasphemes*, has swelled Baudelaire's imprecations and prayers to the devil to the size of a fat volume, in a most dreary and wearisome manner. His mysticism suckles the Symbolists, who, after his example, pretend to perceive mysterious relations between colours and the sensations of the other senses, with this difference, that they hear colours while he smelt them; or, if you will, they have an eye in their ear, while he saw with the nose.

[. . .]

This debauch in pathological and nauseous ideas of a deranged mind with gustatory perversion is a delirium, and has no foundation whatever in philological facts. The Latin of the later period of decadence was coarse and full of errors, in consequence of the increasing barbarity in the manners and taste of the readers, the narrow-mindedness and grammatical ignorance of the writers, and the intrusion of barbarous elements into its vocabulary. But it was very far from expressing 'new ideas with new forms' and from taking

'colours from all palettes;' it surprises us, on the contrary, by its awkwardness in rendering the most simple thoughts, and by its profound impoverishment.

[. . .]



Max Nordau, sworn enemy of the Decadents and Symbolists, would later respond to the Dreyfus Affair by co-founding the World Zionist Organization.

We test every organic desire to see whether it be the outcome of a legitimate need or the consequence of an aberration; whether its satisfaction be beneficial or pernicious to the organism. We distinguish the healthy from the diseased impulse, and demand that the latter be combated. If the desire seeks its satisfaction in an activity acting upon others, then we examine to see if this activity is reconcilable with the existence and prosperity of society, or dangerous to

it. The activity imperiling society offends against law and custom, which are nothing but an epitome of the temporary notions of society concerning what is beneficial and what is pernicious to It.

Notions healthy and diseased, moral and immoral, social or anti-social, are as valid for art as for every other human activity, and there is not a scintilla of reason for regarding a work of art in any other light than that in which we view every other manifestation of an individuality.

It is easily conceivable that the emotion expressed by the artist in his work may proceed from a morbid aberration, may be directed, in an unnatural, sensual, cruel manner, to what is ugly or loathsome. Ought we not in this case to condemn the work and, if possible, to suppress it? How can its right to exist be justified? By claiming that the artist was sincere when he created it, that he gave back what was really existing in him, and for that reason was subjectively justified in his, artistic expansion? But there is a candour which is wholly inadmissible. The dipsomaniac and clastomaniac are sincere when they respectively drink or break everything within reach. We do not, however, acknowledge their right to satisfy their desire. We prevent them by force. We put them under guardianship, although their drunkenness and destructiveness may perhaps be injurious to no one but themselves. And still more decidedly does society oppose itself to the satisfaction of those cravings which cannot be appeased without violently acting upon others. The new science of criminal anthropology admits without dispute that homicidal maniacs, certain incendiaries, many thieves and vagabonds, act under an impulsion; that through their crimes they satisfy an organic craving; that they outrage, kill, burn, idle, as others sit down to dinner, simply because they hunger to do so; but in spite of this and because of this, it demands that the appeasing of the sincere longings of these degenerate creatures be prevented by all means, and, if needs be, by their complete suppression. It never occurs to us to permit the criminal by organic disposition to 'expand' his individuality in crime, and just as little can it be expected of us to permit the degenerate

artist to expand his individuality in immoral works of art. The artist who complacently represents what is reprehensible, vicious, criminal, approves of it, perhaps glorifies it, differs not in kind, but only in degree, from the criminal who actually commits it. It is a question of the intensity of the impulsion and the resisting power of the judgment, perhaps also of courage and cowardice; nothing else. If the actual law does not treat the criminal by intention so rigorously as the criminal in act, it is because criminal law pursues the deed, and not the purpose; the objective phenomenon, not its subjective roots. The Middle Ages had places of sanctuary where criminals could not be molested for their misdemeanours. Modern law has done away with this institution. Ought art to be at present the last asylum to which criminals may fly to escape punishment? Are they to be able to satisfy, in the so-called 'temple' of art, instincts which the policeman prevents them from appeasing in the street? I do not see how a privilege so inimical to society can be willingly defended.

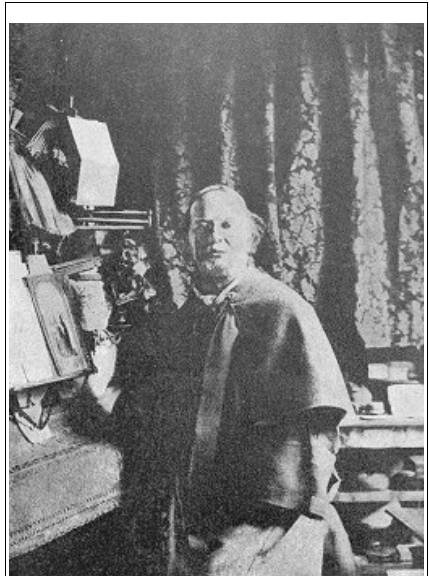
* * *

from Gourmont, *Mallarmé and The Idea of Decadence*, 1898

The term 'Decadence' was used in many ways by many different people to mean many different things. It had first been used as a term of insult by conservative critics morally outraged by the taboo subject matter, violence, and anti-religious subject matter that had continued to be an important part of avant-garde work ever since the Frenetic

Romantics, and which began to become central again in the 1880s. Soon, some avant-gardists themselves started using the term proudly, while others—including Mallarmé—professed to dislike it. Before long though, the term had become so pervasive in the arguments surrounding their work that it became nearly impossible for anybody working within the avant-garde to ignore.

Abruptly, about 1885, the idea of decadence entered French literature. After serving to glorify or to ridicule a whole group of poets, it had perched, as it were, upon a single head. Stéphane Mallarmé was the prince of this ironical, almost injurious realm, as it would have been, had the word itself been rightly understood and employed. But, by an eccentricity which is a Latin trait, the academic world, in keeping with its normal but unwholesome horror when confronted with new tendencies, called thus the fever for originality which tormented a generation. M. Mallarmé, rendered responsible for the acts of rebellion which he had encouraged, appeared to the innocent ass-drivers who accompany but do not conduct the caravan a redoubtable Aladdin, assassin of the sound principles of universal imitation.



Gourmont became a virtual hermit for the last years of his life, after contracting a disfiguring form of Lupus.

[. . .]

Yet, in the case of Mallarmé and of a literary group, the idea of decadence has been assimilated to its exact opposite — the idea of innovation. Such judgments have made a particular impression upon men of one generation because, doubtless, we ourselves were involved and foolishly flouted by "right-minded" critics; they were, however, merely the clumsy and decrepit modern version of those decrees with which the mandarins of every age have sought to curse and to crush the new serpents breaking their shell under the ironical eye of their old mother. Diabolical intelligence laughs at exorcisms, and the University has been no more able than the Church to disinfect it with its holy water. In the past a man rose up — buckler of the faith — against heresies and novelties. He was the Jesuit. Today it is too often the Professor who arises as champion of the rules. Here again we have the antinomy which surprises us in Voltaire and the Voltairian of yesterday. The same man, so courageous where justice or political liberty is concerned, recoils the moment it is a matter of literary novelty or liberty.

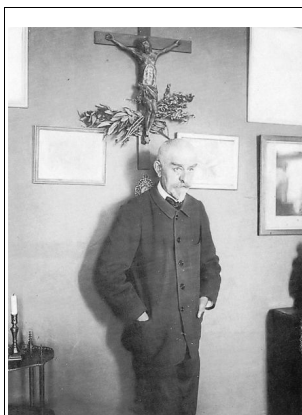
[. . .]

But about this time appeared a book which suddenly enlightened all minds. A parallel imposed itself inexorably between the new poets and the obscure versifiers of the Roman decadence, praised by des Esseintes. The movement was unanimous, and the very ones thus decried accepted this opprobrious epithet as a disjunction. Once the principle was admitted, there was no lack of comparisons. Since no one — not even des Esseintes himself, perhaps

— had read the depreciated poets, it was no trick at all for any critic to compare Sidonius Apollinaris, of whom we knew nothing, with Stéphane Mallarmé, whom he did not understand. Neither Sidonius Apollinaris nor Mallarmé is a decadent, since both possess, in different degrees, their own originality; but for that very reason the word was justly applied to the poet of *L'Après-midi d'un Faune*, for it signified obscurely, in the minds of the very persons who employed it, something little known, difficult, rare, precious, unexpected, new.

* * *

from Joris-Karl Huysmans, *A Rebours*, 1884



Joris-Karl Huysmans, after his conversion to Catholicism

*Joris-Karl Huysmans was, until the early 1880s, a close friend and disciple of the older Zola, and was considered the most promising Realist writer of his generation. But in 1884 he published a book that declared his break with Realism and turned it inside-out: **A Rebours**, which can be translated either as **Against the Grain** or **Against Nature**. Huysmans applied the positivist scientific approach of Naturalism not to the analysis and presentation of socioeconomic conditions, but of the lifestyle of the Dandyist, Decadent and Symbolist avant-garde. He*

conducted many hours of interviews with avant-gardists including his friends Gourmont and Mallarmé regarding their lifestyles, reading habits, and psychological experiments, compiling in the process lists of hundreds of books, paintings, music, food,

perfumes, jewels, and many other cultural artifacts from throughout the history of the West which the Decadents claimed for their own tradition. In the character of Des Esseintes, he imagines the archetypal Decadent, supplied with such riches that he is able to carry his lifestyle to the ultimate degree. The result was an exceedingly strange book, in which the precision and detail of Naturalist fiction is turned into an obsessive examination of cultural alienation. Zola felt betrayed, and their friendship came to a permanent end. There is virtually no plot; each chapter weaves together short episodes of Des Esseintes' daily life, long internal monologues that are masterpieces of literary and artistic criticism, morph into remembered stories of his youth and development, long lists of works from the Decadent canon with brief comments, self-induced hallucinations and mystical practices, and long discourses about his theories of Decadent literature, art, food, theology, perfume, gardening, interior decoration, music, alcohol, and many other topics. After its publication, the book became a model for a generation of people just entering avant-garde subcultures not only in France, but also America, Germany, and England, where the book (banned from publication in Britain) featured prominently in the trial of Oscar Wilde.

A portion of the shelves which lined the walls of his orange and blue study was devoted exclusively to those Latin works assigned to the generic period of "The Decadence" by those whose minds have absorbed the deplorable teachings of the Sorbonne.

The Latin written in that era which professors still persist in calling the Great Age, hardly stimulated Des Esseintes. With its carefully premeditated style, its sameness, its stripping of supple syntax, its poverty of color and nuance, this language, pruned of all the rugged and often rich expressions of the preceding ages, was confined to the enunciation of the majestic banalities, the empty

commonplaces tiresomely reiterated by the rhetoricians and poets; but it betrayed such a lack of curiosity and such a humdrum tediousness, such a drabness, feebleness and jaded solemnity that to find its equal, it was necessary, in linguistic studies, to go to the French style of the period of Louis XIV.

The gentle Vergil, whom instructors call the Mantuan swan, perhaps because he was not born in that city, he considered one of the most terrible pedants ever produced by antiquity. Des Esseintes was exasperated by his immaculate and bedizened shepherds, his Orpheus whom he compares to a weeping nightingale, his Aristaeus who simpers about bees, his Aeneas, that weak-willed, irresolute person who walks with wooden gestures through the length of the poem. Des Esseintes would gladly have accepted the tedious nonsense which those marionettes exchange with each other off-stage; or even the poet's impudent borrowings from Homer, Theocritus, Ennius and Lucretius; the plain theft, revealed to us by Macrobius, of the second song of the *Aeneid*, copied almost word for word from one of Pisander's poems; in fine, all the unutterable emptiness of this heap of verses. The thing he could not forgive, however, and which infuriated him most, was the workmanship of the hexameters, beating like empty tin cans and extending their syllabic quantities measured according to the unchanging rule of a pedantic and dull prosody. He disliked the texture of those stiff verses, in their official garb, their abject reverence for grammar, their mechanical division by imperturbable cæsuras, always plugged at the end in the same way by the impact of a dactyl against a spondee.

Borrowed from the perfected forge of Catullus, this unvarying versification, lacking imagination, lacking pity, padded with useless words and refuse, with pegs of identical and anticipated assonances, this ceaseless wretchedness of Homeric epithet which designates nothing whatever and permits nothing to be seen, all this impoverished vocabulary of muffled, lifeless tones bored him beyond measure.

[. . .]

Petronius was the author whom he truly loved and who caused him forever to abandon the sonorous ingenuities of Lucan, for he was a keen observer, a delicate analyst, a marvelous painter. Tranquilly, without prejudice or hate, he described Rome's daily life, recounting the customs of his epoch in the sprightly little chapters of the *Satyricon*.

Observing the facts of life, stating them in clear, definite form, he revealed the petty existence of the people, their happenings, their bestialities, their passions.

One glimpses the inspector of furnished lodgings who has inquired after the newly arrived travellers; bawdy houses where men prowl around nude women, while through the half-open doors of the rooms couples can be seen in dalliance; the society of the time, in villas of an insolent luxury, a revel of richness and magnificence, or in the poor quarters with their rumpled, bug-ridden folding-beds; impure sharpers, like Ascyte and Eumolpe in search of a rich windfall; old incubi with tucked-up dresses and plastered cheeks of

white lead and red acacia; plump, curled, depraved little girls of sixteen; women who are the prey of hysterical attacks; hunters of heritages offering their sons and daughters to debauched testators. All pass across the pages. They debate in the streets, rub elbows in the baths, beat each other unmercifully as in a pantomime.

And all this recounted in a style of strange freshness and precise color, drawing from all dialects, borrowing expressions from all the languages that were drifting into Rome, extending all the limits, removing all the handicaps of the so-called Great Age. He made each person speak his own idiom: the uneducated freedmen, the vulgar Latin argot of the streets; the strangers, their barbarous patois, the corrupt speech of the African, Syrian and Greek; imbecile pedants, like the Agamemnon of the book, a rhetoric of artificial words. These people are depicted with swift strokes, wallowing around tables, exchanging stupid, drunken speech, uttering senile maxims and inept proverbs.

This realistic novel, this slice of Roman life, without any preoccupation, whatever one may say of it, with reform and satire, without the need of any studied end, or of morality; this story without intrigue or action, portraying the adventures of evil persons, analyzing with a calm finesse the joys and sorrows of these lovers and couples, depicting life in a splendidly wrought language without surrendering himself to any commentary, without approving or cursing the acts and thoughts of his characters, the vices of a decrepit civilization, of an empire that cracks, struck Des Esseintes. In the keenness of the observation, in the firmness of the method, he found

singular comparisons, curious analogies with the few modern French novels he could endure.

[. . .]

This antithesis delighted him. Then the Latin language, arrived at its supreme maturity under Petronius, commenced to decay; the Christian literature replaced it, bringing new words with new ideas, unemployed constructions, strange verbs, adjectives with subtle meanings, abstract words until then rare in the Roman language and whose usage Tertullian had been one of the first to adopt.

But there was no attraction in this dissolution, continued after Tertullian's death by his pupil, Saint Cyprian, by Arnobius and by Lactantius. There was something lacking; it made clumsy returns to Ciceronian magniloquence, but had not yet acquired that special flavor which in the fourth century, and particularly during the centuries following, the odor of Christianity would give the pagan tongue, decomposed like old venison, crumbling at the same time that the old world civilization collapsed, and the Empires, rotted by the putrefaction of the centuries, succumbed to the thrusts of the barbarians.

* * *

*Like Gautier's novel about the Romanticist avant-garde, *The Jeunes-France*, *Against Nature* was simultaneously an affirmation and a critique of the lifestyle it portrayed, both serious and comic. His main character's endless bank account allows Huxmans to blow his own and his friends' obsessions up to the point of caricature, allowing subtle practices and potential problems to*

become more apparent. It also allowed him to draw a good deal of wry humour out of the contradictions of the Decadents' extremely unusual lifestyle.

* * *

The afternoon was drawing to its close when a carriage halted in front of the Fontenay house. Since Des Esseintes received no visitors, and since the postman never even ventured into these uninhabited parts, having no occasion to deliver any papers, magazines or letters, the servants hesitated before opening the door. Then, as the bell was rung furiously again, they peered through the peep-hole cut into the wall, and perceived a man, concealed, from neck to waist, behind an immense gold buckler.

They informed their master, who was breakfasting.

"Ask him in," he said, for he recalled having given his address to a lapidary for the delivery of a purchase.

The man bowed and deposited the buckler on the pinewood floor of the dining room. It oscillated and wavered, revealing the serpentine head of a tortoise which, suddenly terrified, retreated into its shell.

This tortoise was a fancy which had seized Des Esseintes some time before his departure from Paris. Examining an Oriental rug, one day, in reflected light, and following the silver gleams which fell on its web of plum violet and aladin yellow, it suddenly occurred to him how much it would be improved if he could place on it some object whose deep color might enhance the vividness of its tints.

Possessed by this idea, he had been strolling aimlessly along the streets, when suddenly he found himself gazing at the very object of his wishes. There, in a shop window on the Palais Royal, lay a huge tortoise in a large basin. He had purchased it. Then he had sat a long time, with eyes half-shut, studying the effect.

Decidedly, the Ethiopic black, the harsh Sienna tone of this shell dulled the rug's reflections without adding to it. The dominant silver gleams in it barely sparkled, crawling with lack-lustre tones of dead zinc against the edges of the hard, tarnished shell.

He bit his nails while he studied a method of removing these discords and reconciling the determined opposition of the tones. He finally discovered that his first inspiration, which was to animate the fire of the weave by setting it off against some dark object, was erroneous. In fact, this rug was too new, too petulant and gaudy. The colors were not sufficiently subdued. He must reverse the process, dull the tones, and extinguish them by the contrast of a striking object, which would eclipse all else and cast a golden light on the pale silver. Thus stated, the problem was easier to solve. He therefore decided to glaze the shell of the tortoise with gold.

The tortoise, just returned by the lapidary, shone brilliantly, softening the tones of the rug and casting on it a gorgeous reflection which resembled the irradiations from the scales of a barbaric Visigoth shield.

At first Des Esseintes was enchanted with this effect. Then he reflected that this gigantic jewel was only in outline, that it would not really be complete until it had been incrustated with rare stones.

[. . .]

He finally decided on minerals whose reflections vary; for the Compostelle hyacinth, mahogany red; the beryl, glaucous green; the balas ruby, vinegar rose; the Sudermanian ruby, pale slate. Their feeble sparklings sufficed to light the darkness of the shell and preserved the values of the flowering stones which they encircled with a slender garland of vague fires.

Des Esseintes now watched the tortoise squatting in a corner of the dining room, shining in the shadow.

[. . .]

He went to the dining room where, built in one of the panels, was a closet containing a number of tiny casks, ranged side by side, and resting on small stands of sandal wood.

This collection of barrels he called his mouth organ.

A stem could connect all the spigots and control them by a single movement, so that once attached, he had only to press a button concealed in the woodwork to turn on all the taps at the same time and fill the mugs placed underneath.

The organ was now open. The stops labelled flute, horn, celestial voice, were pulled out, ready to be placed. Des Esseintes sipped here and there, enjoying the inner symphonies, succeeded in procuring

sensations in his throat analogous to those which music gives to the ear.

Moreover, each liquor corresponded, according to his thinking, to the sound of some instrument. Dry curacao, for example, to the clarinet whose tone is sourish and velvety; *kümmel* to the oboe whose sonorous notes snuffle; mint and anisette to the flute, at once sugary and peppery, puling and sweet; while, to complete the orchestra, *kirschwasser* has the furious ring of the trumpet; gin and whiskey burn the palate with their strident crashings of trombones and cornets; brandy storms with the deafening hubbub of tubas; while the thunder-claps of the cymbals and the furiously beaten drum roll in the mouth by means of the *rakia de Chio*.

He also thought that the comparison could be continued, that quartets of string instruments could play under the palate, with the violin simulated by old brandy, fumous and fine, piercing and frail; the tenor violin by rum, louder and more sonorous; the cello by the lacerating and lingering ratafia, melancholy and caressing; with the double-bass, full-bodied, solid and dark as the old bitters. If one wished to form a quintet, one could even add a fifth instrument with the vibrant taste, the silvery detached and shrill note of dry cumin imitating the harp.

The comparison was further prolonged. Tone relationships existed in the music of liquors; to cite but one note, benedictine represents, so to speak, the minor key of that major key of alcohols which are designated in commercial scores, under the name of green Chartreuse.

These principles once admitted, he succeeded, after numerous experiments, in enjoying silent melodies on his tongue, mute funeral marches, in hearing, in his mouth, solos of mint, duos of ratafia and rum.

He was even able to transfer to his palate real pieces of music, following the composer step by step, rendering his thought, his effects, his nuances, by combinations or contrasts of liquors, by approximative and skilled mixtures.

At other times, he himself composed melodies, executed pastorals with mild black-currant which evoked, in his throat, the trillings of nightingales; with the tender chouva cocoa which sang saccharine songs like "The romance of Estelle" and the "Ah! Shall I tell you, mama," of past days.

But on this evening Des Esseintes was not inclined to listen to this music. He confined himself to sounding one note on the keyboard of his organ, by swallowing a little glass of genuine Irish whiskey.

He sank into his easy chair and slowly inhaled this fermented juice of oats and barley: a pronounced taste of creosote was in his mouth.

Gradually, as he drank, his thought followed the now revived sensitiveness of his palate, fitted its progress to the flavor of the whiskey, re-awakened, by a fatal exactitude of odors, memories effaced for years.

This carbolic tartness forcibly recalled to him the same taste he had had on his tongue in the days when dentists worked on his gums.

Once abandoned on this track, his reverie, at first dispersed among all the dentists he had known, concentrated and converged on one of them who was more firmly engraved in his memory.

[. . .]

“Phew!” he exclaimed, saddened by the assault of these memories. He rose to dissipate the horrible spell of this vision and, returning to reality, began to be concerned with the tortoise.

It did not budge at all and he tapped it. The animal was dead. Doubtless accustomed to a sedentary existence, to a humble life spent



Jean Richepin, pictured in 1878 by Nadar, had fought as a franc-tireur or guerilla in the Franco-Prussian war and worked as a sailor and an actor at various times.

underneath its poor shell, it had been unable to support the dazzling luxury imposed on it, the rutilant cope with which it had been covered, the jewels with which its back had been paved, like a pyx.

* * *

by Jean Richepin (1884):

Among those who most welcomed the name of ‘Decadent’ were writers such as Jean Richepin, whose work was almost entirely concentrated on violent, Satanic, supernatural and pathological imagery,

*blending into the Gothic-Horror genre in a way that recalled Frenetic Romanticism. In **The Hun**, he joyously celebrates the career of Atilla, the 'Barbarian' leader who first exposed the weakness of the declining Roman Empire.*

The Hun

Fly swift, my furious courser!
German and Goth and Frank
And Gaul and Roman rank
Roll back beneath thy flank.

Before my fiery courser.

Ha! Ha!

The old world reels and quivers
Like mist the tempest shivers,

Attila!

Attila!

Gallop full-blown and breathless!

I fly before the sun,

From naked uplands dun

By wild winds whirled and spun:

They breed the whirlwind breathless,

Ha! Ha!

That round my swift flight whistles

Light fleece from shaken thistles,

Attila!

Attila!

I plunge through limitless spaces

And leaping hill and dale

Swoop on those purlieus pale

Where horseless legions quail:

I revel in boundless spaces,

Ha! Ha!

Nor halt my flying eagles,
Swift in the chase as beagles.

Attila!

Attila!

With gallop proud and splendid
I pass, like hounds in cry,
And where my chargers fly
Wide-strewn the corpses lie:
My swords are swift and splendid,

Ha! Ha!

The land with slain they scatter,
As flails the red sheaves shatter.

Attila!

Attila!

[. . .]

Political positions varied hugely in the Decadent community, from aristocratic ultra-Catholicism to militant atheist anarchism. The constant collaboration and shared influence by people of such disparate ideas sometimes resulted in strange hybrids; Huysmans, for instance, dabbled in the thriving avant-garde Satanist and Spiritualist communities in the late 1880s, only to end his life in a Monastery. Richepin was a member of the Decadent Hydropathes group, a militantly atheist collective whose name means 'Water Haters' or 'the Rabi'. He claimed that he hoped for his collection 'The Blasphemies' to become 'The Bible of Atheism'.

The Death of the Gods

See! brothers, weak and weary have I striven
Against the Almighty Ones clothed round with fear;
Glorying in impious pride my pledge was given,
And, having ransacked Heaven, lo, I am here!

When I snuffed out the Gods, as one erases
A word, they thundered not nor reasoned why:
You, therefore, shall lift up your prostrate faces
And gaze on these great corpses where they lie.

You, searching Heaven, void as a pauper's fingers,
Shall scorn the phantoms that no more bewitch,
And, free to pluck from hope the flower that lingers,
Shall cast your terrors in the wayside ditch.

You shall tear down the veils of fraud and wonder,
Finding no Lord beyond Life's utmost bars,
And watch in brooding space, now cloven asunder,
Beneath the wing of Chance burst forth the Stars.

For you the Force of Things in wide dispersal
Streams, as a shoreless, soundless ocean flows,
In endless whirlpools of life universal,
The whence and why whereof no mortal knows.

You, knowing your own souls lost in infinite numbers,
Even as a dewdrop plunged in the deep stream,
Shall judge the Gods, those nightmares of man's slumbers,
In life's vast Ail as shadows of a dream.

Tranquil, as with a conqueror's calm elation,
Deceived no more by priests' and preachers' arts,
In this warm coign o' the world's blest habitation
You shall repose in peace your ransomed hearts.

Good shall be yours, though mixed with evil measure,
Even as the nursling, the poor vagrant's child
That sucks her breast, closes his eyes in pleasure,
Heedless of wrinkled teats and skin defiled.

Cleansing your souls of every vague desire,
Your love, on wives' and mothers' flowery lips,
Shall soon forget youth's kiss of frenzied fire
On shadowy bosoms lost in dim eclipse.

By simple craving that like comfort pleases,
Renewed at ease and with each morning fresh;
By hope drawn nigh, that small endeavour seizes,
Your spirits shall live free in the freed flesh.

Longings fulfilled and solace for all sadness
Shall be your blissful lot, your wonted fare,
So shall ye drink the wine of holiest gladness
In boundless Beauty and Love that all may share.

No longer shall your hearts dread pale-eyed Sorrow,
Misshapen Will, Remorse with choking curse;
Living like children careless of the morrow,
Cradled on Nature's knees, your loving nurse.

Faith's agonies, the barren vows of ages,
Fantastic superstitions, cruel deeds.
Gospels, Korans, Vedas, those lying pages,
The time-worn wreckage of Beliefs and Creeds,

Like carrion vultures, hoarse and fierce and savage,
That hovered on your hearts six thousand years
And with your bleeding flesh glutted their ravage,
Fouling the air in mockery of your fears,

Baffled and blinded by the morning glory
And shrieking in the sun's remorseless light,
Shall whirl in confused flock, haggard and hoary,
As in their dismal swarm the birds of night.

And when at last, with clouds and darkness blended,
They speed their flight, like a funereal knell
Their ghosts shall hear your laughter vast and splendid
Exultant from earth's shivering bosom swell.

Then comes the end. Climbing on fanes forsaken
Wild vines shall hide the doors, like grass on graves;
Dead idol and dead priest no more shall waken,
Oblivion rolls them under her slow waves.

Alone lost legends live in hearts of lovers
That wander in the woods of old romance,
Charmed by an echoing voice, that vaguely hovers,
To linger there awhile in mystic trance.

Even they, losing the names dark generations
Gave to those bloody spectres, when day comes,
Shall hear their echoes, hushed to faint vibrations,
Die like the muffled roll of distant drums.

Then, when those names that filled the world's loud clarion
Sink like the memory of a vanished clan,
Man's pride shall spring, a rose from gods grown carrion.
For earth has one sole God, and he is Man!

* * *

Symbolism

from William John Robertson, *A Century of French Verse*, 1895

If 'Decadence' was a vague and much-contested word, 'Symbolism' was at least as much so; and in practice both designations could often be applied to the same writer; and yet they were not entirely synonymous. Though Symbolist writers were greatly admired by Decadents, the core of the Symbolist project was not specifically 'decadent'. The term came gradually to refer to the community personified by the poet and theorist Stéphane Mallarmé. A member of the Parnassian network since the 1860s, Mallarmé had around that time undergone a profound mystical experience in which, as he said, his 'Self' was forever annihilated and he had come to experience consciousness as an expression of Language itself, through which the world could act. While living most of his life as an obscure English tutor in the provinces, he devoted his life to developing the 'Cult of Art' into a highly complex form of atheist nihilism. The resulting poems are among the most complex texts ever written — many of his poems taking several decades to write, and circulating only in manuscript and scattered in small journals. As a result his work was known to very few people even within the avant-garde; but he carried on a voluminous correspondence, and when in middle-age he moved to Paris his weekly salons became the centre of the Parisian avant-garde community; by the mid-1880s he had become the mentor of the young generation of avant-gardists, much as Gautier had done forty years earlier.

From his obscure retreat the poet contributed to the Parnasse contemporain some of those exquisitely-wrought pieces which have given him a place of his own in French literature and which are acknowledged as models by the new generation of French artists in verse. Since he resumed his residence in the capital Stéphane Mallarmé has continued to lead a sequestered and studious existence. There is nothing of the vagabond Bohemian in him; his chief



Mallarmé only achieved notoriety toward the end of his life, when he became the mentor of a generation of avant-gardists and the pariah of the mainstream literary world.

recreations are stage-ballets and organ-recitals, with an occasional excursion on the Seine along the solitary boundaries of the forest of Fontainebleau.

Stéphane Mallarmé is a man of simple and unassuming character and his discourse is full of fascination. It would scarcely be believed, in face of the elaborate achievements of his maturer muse, that he had the boyish ambition to emulate Béranger as a singer of chansons. His first effusions were nevertheless inspired by the popular song. In his later poems symbol is linked to symbol so closely that it is hard to seize the sense on a superficial reading and a difficult task to translate them. Every idea has been distilled through an intellectual alembic until a degree of subtilised expression is reached which has no rival in French poetry and which seems almost alien to

the natural lucidity and simplicity of the language. Hence the charge of 'obscurity' which has been leveled at Mallarmé as persistently as it was against Browning, who attained to a similarly intense concentration of poetical utterance. Curious involutions, abnormal punctuation, the employment of the absolute image instead of the metaphor and an individual vigor of expression which seems almost independent of the recognized articulation of language give character to a poetical style which is perhaps more nearly akin to that of Sordello than to any other type in English or French literature. This designed 'obscurity', which is the cynosure of the super-spiritual school of verse, is naturally the aversion of the common-sense critic, whose scientific analysis has stripped Baudelaire almost bare and attempted to polarize the brilliant light of Victor Hugo.

* * *

from Remy de Gourmont, *Mallarmé and the Idea*
of *Decadence 1898*

Mallarmé's texts were profoundly disorienting: the Poem, he maintained, should aim at annihilating the object that inspires it, leaving only the outline traced in its absence. Thus description was eliminated, only metaphor remaining, with only the most difficult cues as to what their origin might be. Every ambiguity in the French language was exploited—puns, ambiguous syntax and grammar, pronouns and articles whose objects were not specified—and arranged in such a way that often a poem might be read as being about two very different subjects, saying many different things, while still remaining perfectly grammatically correct. The musicality of Parnassian poetry was pressed even farther to result in fugues of vowel-sounds which fused when read aloud to

produce yet more puns and ambiguities. As he achieved notoriety toward the end of his life, his detractors called him pretentious or unintelligible, while those in the avant-garde found his work to transform consciousness. Gourmont wrote this essay on his mentor the year of Mallarmé's death.

Hatred is queen in the hierarchy of literary sentiments. Literature is, perhaps, with religion, the abstract passion which excites men most violently. True, we have not yet seen literary wars resembling the religious wars of — let us say — the past; but that is because literature has never yet descended suddenly to the people's level. By the time it reaches them, it has lost its explosive force. It is far from the first night of *Hernani* to the sale of the play in illustrated editions. However, it is not hard to imagine a mobilization of German sentimentality against English humor or French irony. It is because people do not know each other that they hate each other so little. An alliance marked by close fraternization always ends in cannon shot.

The hatred which pursued Mallarmé was never very bitter, for men hate seriously, even in matters of literature, only when material interests come to envenom a little the strife for the ideal; but he offered no surface for envy, and he bore injustice and abuse as necessities inherent in the very nature of genius. It was only, then, the pure and unalloyed superiority of his intelligence that was derided, on the pretext that he was obscure. Artists, even when depreciated by instinctive cabals, receive orders, earn money. Poets have the resource of long articles in the reviews and in the newspapers. Certain of them, like Théophile Gautier, earned their living in this

way. Baudelaire succeeded ill at it, Mallarmé worse still. It was, then, in his case, against the poet stripped of every social ornament that the sarcasm was directed.

[. . .]

There are too few obscure writers in French. So we accustom ourselves like cowards to love only writing that is easy and that will soon be elementary. Yet it is rare that books blindly clear are worth rereading. It is clearness that constitutes the prestige of classic literature and it is clearness that makes them so clearly tiresome. Clear minds are commonly those that see but one thing at a time. When the brain is rich in sensations and in ideas, there is a constant eddy, and the smooth surface is troubled at the moment of spouting. Let us, like M. Doudan, prefer marshes swarming with life to a glass of clear water. One is thirsty at times, to be sure. Well, then, one filters. Literature which gives immediate pleasure to all men is necessarily of no value. It must first, falling from on high, leap in cascades from ledge to ledge, in order to flow at last through the valley, within reach of all men and of all stocks.

If, then, one undertook a definitive study of Stéphane Mallarmé, the question of obscurity would have to be treated exclusively from the psychological standpoint, for the reason that there is never absolute, literal obscurity in an honestly written work. A sensible interpretation is always possible. It will, perhaps, vary according to the evening hour, like the play of cloud-shadows on the velvet lawn; but the truth, here and everywhere, will be what our passing sentiment shall make it. Mallarmé's work is the most

marvelous pretext for reveries yet offered men weary of so many heavy and useless affirmations. It may well be that a poetry full of doubts, of shifting shades, and of ambiguous perfumes, can alone please us henceforward; and, if the word decadence really summed up all these autumnal, twilight charms, we might welcome it, even making it one of the keys of the viol; but it is dead; the master is dead, the penultimate is dead.

* * *

Stéphane Mallarmé, *Sonnet*

Due to the nature of Symbolist poetry, which was rooted in the specificity of his own language and involved such intricate networks of associations and linguistic events, their work is nearly impossible to translate, and was very rarely attempted in the 19th Century. For this reason most examples here—restricted as we are to the Public Domain—are prose poems, while the single verse translation below cannot remotely do service to the original. I urge anybody interested in Mallarmé's work to explore the translations of Henry Wienfeld, which are absolute masterpieces of the translator's craft, accompanied by extremely detailed poem-by-poem notes explaining the intricacies that Wienfeld was unable to retain.

My tomes reclosed upon the Paphian name,
I laugh, when on sole spirit-sense emerges
A ruin, blessed with foam of myriad surges

Beneath the hyacinth, in days of fame.

Cold with scythe-silences outstrips the flame;
Yet shall I ululate no hollow dirges
If such mere virgin-sport, that earthward verges,

Balk every site of the false landscape's claim.

My hunger that no fruits of earth appease
Finds in their learned lack the savour of these:
Burst, one of human flesh with fragrance blent!

Some snake, stirred by our love, I tread upon,
Long pondering and perchance with ravishment
The burned breast of an antique amazon.

[. . .]

Stéphane Mallarmé, Two Prose Poems, 1891

In Autumn

Since Maria has left me for another star which one, Orion, Altaïr, or is it thou, green Venus? I have always cherished solitude. How many long days have I passed alone with my cat! By alone, I mean with no material being; and my cat is a mystic companion, a spirit. I can therefore say that I have passed long days with my cat, and alone, with one of the last authors of the Latin decadence. For since the white creature is no more, strangely and singularly have I loved all that is summed up in that word: fall. Thus, of the year, my favorite season is the last languishing days of summer, that immediately precede autumn; and of the day, the hour that I choose for going forth is when the sun rests before sinking, with rays of

yellow brass upon the gray walls, and of red brass upon the window-panes. In the same way the literature from which my spirit seeks a sad voluptuousness will be the agonizing poetry of the last moments of Rome, so long, however, as it in nowise betrays the rejuvenating approach of the Barbarians, and does not lisp the infantile Latin of the first Christian prose.

I was therefore reading one of those dear poems (whose scaling enamel has more charm for me than the carnation of youth), and had plunged a hand in the fur of the pure animal, when a barrel-organ began to sing languishingly and mournfully under my window. It played in the long walk of poplars, whose leaves seem to me yellow, even in summer, since Maria has passed there with tapers for the last time. The instrument of those that are sad, yes, truly: the piano scintillates, the violin opens light to the torn soul, but the barrel-organ, in the dusk of memory, has made me despairingly dream. Now that it was murmuring a joyously vulgar tune, that made the heart of the Faubourgs grow merry, a superannuated and hackneyed tune, whence came it that its flourishes lured me to dreams and made me weep like a romantic ballad? I imbibed it slowly, and I refrained from throwing a penny out of the window, for fear of making a movement and of finding that the instrument was not singing of itself.

[. . .]

In Winter

That timepiece of Saxony, that delays and rings thirteen hours among its flowers and its gods, to whom has it belonged? Methinks that it came from Saxony by the slow stage-coaches, of yore.

(Singular shadows hang from the tarnished panes.)

And thy Venetian mirror, deep as a cool fountain in its frame of ungilt chimeras, whom has it reflected? I am sure that more than one woman has bathed in its water the sin of her beauty; and perchance I might see a naked ghost if I looked long enough.

"Mischievous one, thou often sayest wicked things." . . .

(I see spider-webs high up on the great windows.)

Our coffer is very old: behold how the fire reddens its sad wood-work; the deadened curtains are as old as it, and the tapestry of the arm-chairs whose colors have grown dim, and the ancient engravings on the walls, and all our olden furniture. Seemeth it not to thee, indeed, that the Bengalis and the bluebird have lost their tints with time?

(Do not think of the spider-webs that tremble high up on the great windows.)

Thou lovest all those things, and that is why I can live near thee. Hast thou not desired, O my sister whose eyes look out from the past, that in one of my poems should appear these words, "the grace of faded things?" New objects displease thee; thee also do they

frighten with their shrieking boldness, and thou wouldst feel the need of using them a difficult task for those who do not relish action.

Come, close thine old German almanac, which them readeſt with attention, although it appeared more than a hundred years ago, and the kings that it announces are all dead; and throwing myſelf on the ancient carpet, my head cradled between thy charitable knees on thy dreſs of dim colors, O tranquil child, I will talk to thee for hours; there are no more fields, and the ſtreets are empty, and I will talk to thee of our furniture. Thou art abſent-minded?

(Thoſe ſpider webs ſhake high on the great windows.)

* * *

Émile Hennequin, *Words*

Although their detractors often accused the Symbolists of being vague, nostalgic dreamers, in reality the Symbolists were the first writers to systematically engage with emerging scientific theories regarding psychology, cognition, perception, and the central nervous system. Their theoretical literature was deeply concerned with the relationships between thought, language, and the body, and attempted to respond to the changes wrought in human perception by the conditions of industrialized urban life. Symbolist theorists who were consistently engaged with these relationships included Mallarmé, Gourmont, Stuart Merrill, and Emile Hennequin, who like Mallarmé attempted to encourage Symbolist consciousness through integrating the techniques of Symbolist poetry with that of theoretical essays.

In our crazed brains words are visions, visions ecstatic, visions chimerical, are visions without models and without object, ideals rather than images, desires rather than reminiscences ; and how distant these ideals, how painful these desires!

There is no woman who gives us the radiant dream that lurks beneath the word Woman ; there is no wine that realizes the intoxication imagined by the word Wine ; there is no gold, pale gold or dusky gold, that gives out the tawny fulguration of the word Gold ; there is no perfume that our deceived nostrils find equal to the word Perfume; no blue, no red that figures the tints with which our imaginations are colored; all is too little for the word All ; and no nothingness is an empty enough vacuity as to be that arch-terrorist word, Nothing.

What is to be done, then, in this world where everything is beneath our expectations? What is to be done, O my mind, with these diminished realities, reduced and dim images of our thoughts, sticks of which we have made thyrses, banjos of which we have made citherns, aquarelles that we have anilinizd, dreams opiated by us. In truth, incapable of lowering itself, incapable also of raising things, let my spirit continue to suffer the shrill dissonance, to see the repugnant contrast, to feel the disproportion, till the inferior has won and till matter has taken back to its bosom what scorned it for having too much loved it.

* * *

Ephraïm Mikhaël, *The Toyshop*

Mikhaël was a regular guest at Mallarmé's soirées and was very active in the early years of the Symbolist community, until his life was cut short by tuberculosis in 1890, at the age of 24.

I do not remember at present either the time, or the place, or whether it was in a dream. Men and women were walking to and fro on a long promenade, and I was walking to and fro with the crowd, a rich crowd, whence arose feminine perfumes. And notwithstanding the soft splendor of the furs and velvets that brushed against me, notwithstanding the red smiles of lips half seen under delicate veils, I was seized with a vague weariness thus to see on my right and on my left the slow procession of monotonous promenaders.

Now, on a bench, a man was gazing upon the crowd with strange eyes, and as I approached him I heard him sob. I asked him



*Ephraïm Mikhaël c. 1889,
drawn by Rémi Mathis*

why he thus lamented; and, uplifting his great feverish eyes, he who wept said;

"I am sad, you see, because for many days I have been shut up in this toyshop. For many days and many years I have seen none but puppets, and I am weary of being alone alive. They are of wood, but so marvelously fashioned that they move and speak like me.

And yet I know they can only make forever the same movements and say forever the same words.

"These beautiful dolls, dressed in velvets and furs, who trail in the air a love-inspiring odor of iris, they are even better articulated. Their springs are much more delicate than the others, and when you know how to make them work you have the illusion of life."

He was silent for a moment; then, with the solemn voice of those who remember:

"Of yore I had chosen one, deliciously frail, and often in the evenings I held her in my arms. I had told her so many sweet things, that I finally believed she understood them; and I had tried so often to warm her with kisses that I thought she was alive. But I have since perceived that she too, like the others, was a doll stuffed with bran.

"Long have I hoped that some puppet might make a new movement, say a word that the others had not said. Now I am tired of breathing my dreams into them. I am weary, and I wish to leave this toyshop where they have shut me up. I implore you, if you can, lead me outside outside, where there are living beings."

* * *

Judith Gautier, *Poems from the Japanese*



Judith Gautier, c. 1880. Unhappily married to the Parnassian writer Catulle Mendès (see Vol. II), Gautier continued as an important presence in the avant-garde as a translator and playwright long after their separation.

During the reign of Napoleon III, trade and travel to Japan had been opened to a degree hitherto unknown, becoming a major inspiration for a generation of French artists and intellectuals. By the 1880s Japanese influence pervaded painting, the visual arts, and to a lesser degree literature and philosophy; the Realist writer and socialist activist Jules Claretie coined the term 'Japonisme' to designate the phenomenon. One of the most important promoters of Japanese culture within the avant-garde was Théophile Gautier's daughter Judith Gautier (sometimes spelled Gauthier), who introduced Japanese literature to the Symbolist community through her work as a translator and anthologist of Japanese poetry, as well as

through her historical plays exploring Japanese history and culture, some written in collaboration with other Symbolists such as Pierre Loti. In one sense she continued the Romanticist Orientalism with which her father had been so heavily involved. But while Orientalism had rarely reached farther than portraying a Western fantasy-image of Eastern sumptuousness, his daughters generation attempted to engage more sensitively and respectfully with Eastern culture. In the process they integrated its perspectives into evolving Western practices in ways that were both more subtle and more fundamental. The texts below are translated by her friend Stuart Merrill, an expatriate American writer, from Gautier's own French translations of the Japanese original.

The Mysterious Flute

After Li-Taï-Pé

One day, from beyond the foliage and the perfumed flowers,
the wind brought me the sound of a distant flute.

I carved a willow branch and I answered with a song.

Since then, at night, when everything is asleep, the birds
enjoy a conversation in their own language.

[. . .]

A Young Girl's Cares

After Hang-Oo

The moon lights the interior court; I put my head out of the
window, and I look at the steps of the stair-way.

I see the reflection of the foliage and the agitation of the
shadows of the swing rocked by the wind.

I retire and lie down on my trellised bed; the coolness of the
night has seized me; I tremble in my solitary chamber.

And now I hear the rain falling in the lake! To-morrow my
little boat will be wet; how shall I be able to cull the water-lilies?

Section 6:

Politics & Populism in the Third Republic



After 1872, France had finally established a relatively secure Democracy, but the form of the Third Republic satisfied few people. Those on the Left were disappointed in its adoption of Capitalism and continuation of the Second Empire's policies of favouring industry and property over workers and quality of life; those on the right decried the advance of Republicanism and the growing opposition to traditional codes of morality. Both sides struggled for the support of a massive population of workers, peasants, and others who had never before been able to engage with politics, and who were often poorly educated and inexperienced at analyzing the forces behind public affairs. At the same time, both extremes of the political spectrum had been ideologically fractured by their defeats in 1871—the Right into Napoleonic, Orléanist, and Ultra-Catholic factions, the Left into Socialist, Communist, Anarchist, and Progressive factions. All of this was compounded by the lingering resentment and humiliation felt by most French people over the disaster of the Franco-Prussian War. As the century neared its end, all of these tendencies moved toward their extremes, making for an increasingly volatile political situation that set the stage for the tumultuous 20th Century. In retribution for the violent suppression of the working class demonstration shown here, the anarchist Ravachol embarked upon a bombing campaign that terrified upper-class Paris and made him a hero among those of the Radical Left.

Boulangism

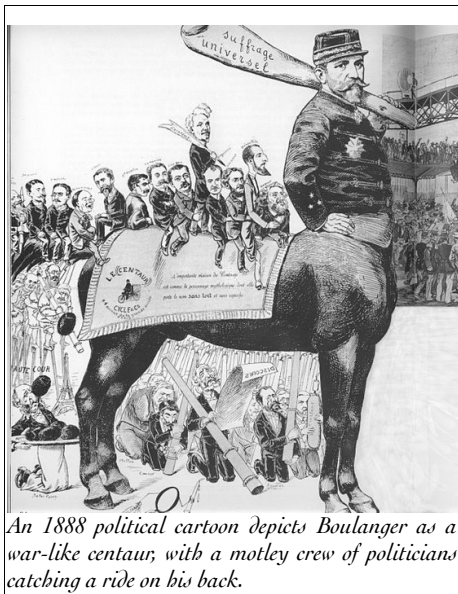
from Ernest Alfred Vizetelly, *Republican France*, 1912

The form of the Third Republic satisfied few people. Those on the Left were disappointed in its adoption of Capitalism and continuation of the Second Empire's policies of favouring industry and property over workers and quality of life; those on the Right decried the advance of Republicanism and the growing opposition to traditional codes of morality. At the same time, both extremes of the political spectrum had been ideologically fractured by their defeats in 1871 —the Right into Napoleonic, Orléanist, and Ultra-Catholic factions, the Left into Socialist, Communist, Anarchist, and Progressive factions. All of this was compounded by the lingering resentment and humiliation felt by most French people over the disaster of the Franco-Prussian War. In the 1880s General Georges Boulanger, a war hero of the Franco-Prussian War who had been wounded while fighting against the Paris Commune, exploited the confused situation to assemble a paradoxical coalition of supporters from both the Left and the Right. Like Napoleon III before him, Boulanger garnered widespread support from anybody dissatisfied with the status quo by means of a vigorous advertising campaign and fostering a dynamic public image, uniting his supporters by their hatred of Prussia but keeping his platform vague and undefined so that everybody's political goals could be projected onto him. Boulanger pioneered the strategy later used by Mussolini, Hitler, and Stalin: taking advantage of the confused economic and political situation by building a coalition dominated by radical Leftists and gradually steering his movement toward a version of conservatism based on hatred and xenophobia.



**General Boulanger,
photograph by Nadar**

[Boulanger] openly became the leader of a hybrid party, one formed of all sorts of antagonistic elements. Though we feel that he was really fighting for his own hand, he seemed to be playing a quadruple role. To the Royalists he promised the restoration of the Monarchy, to the Imperialists a plebiscitum, to the Patriots the recovery of Alsace-Lorraine, to the Republican Extremists a



democratic revision of the Constitution. All that *sub rosa*, of course. Publicly his programme was summed up in three points: Dissolution of the existing Legislature, revision of the Constitution, and election of a Constituent Assembly. He would, indeed, have revived a regime akin to that of 1848, with one Chamber only, a President elected by the whole country

and independent of that Chamber —that is to say, disposing of the military, naval, and police forces, and all the public functionaries.

Of the General's popularity in many directions there can be no doubt. During his administration at the War Office he had certainly done his utmost, and without *arrière pen-ste*, we think, to ensure all possible creature comforts to the troops.

Thus the men were grateful to him. Among the officers many of the younger ones favoured his cause: Eager as they were for a

promotion, which a war for the recovery of Alsace- Lorraine might bring them. But, fortunately perhaps for the Republic — and unlike Louis Napoleon prior to the Coup d'Etat — he had not a single general officer on his side. The thoughtless masses favoured him in many parts, for a virulent and unscrupulous press denounced what they called Republican corruption on all sides. Here and there, too, money was at work. Portraits, broadsheets, and pamphlets soon flooded the country. As for the songs in Boulanger's favour, they were innumerable, and in France there is nothing like a good song to further a man's popularity or a political cause.

[. . .]

Let us now turn to the affairs of General Boulanger. Some of his intrigues during the recent presidential crisis were well known to the Government, though at this date it was not aware that in addition to his close intercourse with extreme Radicals and ultra-Patriots he had established direct relations with the Bonapartist and Royalist factions also. The Bonapartists had been first in the field in their endeavour to capture the General for their cause, the idea emanating from one of their journalists, a certain M. George Thiébaud, who prevailed so far with Boulanger that already early in 1887 the latter accompanied him under the name of Major Solar on a secret visit to Prince Napoleon Jerome in Switzerland. It does not appear that there was then any absolute proposal that Boulanger should restore the Empire. The basis of the negotiations was that Parliamentary rule was collapsing in France, that the Constitution needed revision, and that there ought to be a Plebiscitum or appeal to the people. The rest the conversation between the General and the Prince covered the position of France in regard to Germany and Alsace-Lorraine, the

Prince naturally holding that the recovery of the lost provinces might greatly facilitate the restoration of the Empire. In the course of the visit the Prince showed Boulanger his interesting collection of Napoleonic relics, including the telescopic spyglass which the great captain used at Waterloo, and the sword he carried at Marengo. The latter particularly interested Boulanger, and the Prince, observing it, said to him, " Well, on the day you have restored Alsace-Lorraine to France that sword, I promise you, shall be yours."

The General's direct intercourse with the Royalists dated from the second of the " Historical Nights " mentioned in our last chapter. Either before or after his interviews with the Radical leaders he was approached by M. de Martimprey, who urged that the Republic had fallen so low owing to the decorations scandal, that it was absurd to prolong its agony, and that the right course would be to restore the monarchy — Boulanger playing the glorious role of a General Monk. One of the ex-Minister of War's prominent supporters, a certain Count Dillon, who claimed descent from the Dillons of the court of Marie Antoinette, and who was a director of a French transatlantic cable company, was present on this occasion, and likewise declared himself to be a Royalist at heart. Baron de Mackau, a prominent adherent of the Count de Paris, also saw the General, who, so far as words went, acquiesced in the suggestions made to him. Mackau then communicated with the Marquis de Beauvoir, the Count de Paris' official representative in France, and the Marquis wrote the Pretender a vaguely worded letter respecting a general officer who favoured the restoration of the monarchy — so vague a letter indeed, that the Count de Paris imagined at first that it must refer to M. de Galliffet. However, the present Duke Decazes

(son of the former Foreign Minister) soon proceeded to London with full particulars.

Those matters were not known, it would seem, to General Logerot, the new Minister of War, when he took office, but he was acquainted with Boulanger's various acts of indiscipline, being quite aware that he had lately made three journeys to Paris without leave. On two of those occasions he had been disguised. The Minister therefore addressed a report to President Carnot, recommending that Boulanger should be removed from his command at Clermont-Ferrand, and placed on half pay. " Approved. The President of the Republic — Carnot " was appended to that report when it appeared in the *Journal Officiel*, to the consternation of Boulanger's supporters. He, carried away by anger, did not even wait to hand over his command to his successor, as he should have done, but hastened to Paris, where a Committee of Protest gathered around him. Among its members were several Republican Extremists, such as Laur, Laisant, Deroulede, Naquet, Rochefort, Mayer, and Le Herisse, and some disguised Royalists and Bonapartists, such as Dillon and Thiebaud. Some bye-elections were then pending in the Aisne (Mezieres), and the Bouches-du-Rhone (Marseilles), and it was resolved that the General's name should be submitted to those constituencies. Money was needed, however, and a member of the Committee exerted himself to find it.

[. . .]

Although sincere Radical Republicans began to fear his ambition — even Clemenceau, his old school chum at Rennes, at last drawing away from him, as he ought to have done much sooner — they adhered to one principle which he enunciated in his own

programme, that of the revision of the Constitution. They did not appear to realise that safety for the Republic resided in the maintenance of the existing order of things, at least for the time being. They feared, apparently, that if the opportunity for revision were allowed to slip it might not occur again for many years. Floquet, who was then President of the Chamber, expressed that view, holding, moreover, that revision if properly effected would pacify the country and check the Caesarian tendencies which Boulangerism was assuming.

[. . .]

There were, of course, several Jews among Boulanger's entourage, but they were men like Mayer and Meyer who had apostatised for their private ends ; and, curiously enough, Boulanger, desirous of pleasing everybody in turn, occasionally posed as an anti-Semite, saying; "One of the first things we shall have to do will be to rid France of the Jews!" In those days, be it added, anti-Semitism — destined to reach its apogee at the time of the Dreyfus case — was already rampant in several directions, for Édouard Drumont's notorious book, *La France Juive*, had been published in 1886.

[. . .]

Thousands who knew nothing of what was occurring behind the scenes, looked to Boulanger as to a man who would restore the national life to a state of cleanliness, prosperity, and dignity ; a man also, who would heal France of the wound from which she had been bleeding ever since 1870, and make her whole again. All those confiding, simple-minded, honest folk knew nothing of the General's real character, or took account of the many ambitions gravitating

around him, the cortege of anxious pretenders and needy or aspiring adventurers, each of whom desired to make the popular hero his tool.

Thus the progress of " the cause " continued. Even as the lily and the violet were the emblems of the orthodox Royalists and Bonapartists, so now the red carnation flaunted its sanguineous hue and shed its spicy perfume through the Boulangist ranks. When the real flower was not to be obtained, an artificial one decorated each stalwart's buttonhole. The party's motto was virtually that of the League of Patriots, so largely recruited from its midst : "Who goes there? France!"

[. . .]

The party was so confident of success that only some \$ 2000 were spent on this occasion, with the result that Boulanger was defeated by 15,000 votes. This elated the Republicans, who immediately declared that the movement had spent its force and was subsiding. But on August 19 there were bye-elections for the Nord, the Somme and the Charente Inferieure, the General being a candidate in all three departments. And all three elected him, the first by 142,000, the second by 57,000, and the third by 76,000 votes. Once more, then, the Republicans were plunged in consternation.

[. . .]

Intense was the excitement that night in Paris. Boulanger and his intimates assembled at the Cafe Durand, near the Madeleine, their usual meeting-place, and many people imagined that, in presence of this crowning success, the General would march without hesitation on the Elysee Palace. The police regarded him with favour, the picked soldiers of the Garde Republicaine made no secret of their

sympathy, and certainly no more favourable opportunity of success was ever offered him. But he made no attempt whatever, being, it seemed, amply satisfied with the votes he had secured that day. His inaction has been accounted for in various ways. According to some writers he lacked the moral courage necessary to attempt a Coup d'Etat; according to others he was held in check by the thought that should he fail and be arrested or shot — it mattered little which — he would forever lose Mme. de Bonnemains, and according to others, he was resolved, before taking any decisive action, to await the result of the general elections which must come some months later.

* * *

Paul Déroulède, *Credo*, 1874

After the suppression of the Commune, Déroulède founded an influential Nationalist pressure-group called the Patriots' League, advocating conservative values, military culture, and a war of revenge against Prussia. By the early 1880s Déroulède was a fierce opponent of Republican government and became one of the chief advisors of General Boulanger, using the Patriots' League as a bastion of Boulangist support. After Boulanger's suicide, Déroulède continued to advocate against democracy. In 1899 he attempted to convince General Gaudérique Roget to stage a military coup d'état; when the general refused,



One of his generation's most ardent proponents of militarism & conservatism, Paul Déroulède's public funeral in 1914 was attended by more people than any since that of the ardent democratic icon Victor Hugo.

Déroulède publicly insisted on him being arrested for treason. He was acquitted despite his insistence that, if released, he would attempt another coup. True to his word, he was arrested again less than three months later for another attempt and banished for ten years. He was a leader of the anti-Dreyfus campaign, though he attempted to frame it as a purely military matter, speaking against the anti-Semitism at the heart of the movement.

I trust in God. The time is vile and troubled.
A breath of blasphemy blows souls aflame ;
When wealth with honour plays the stakes are doubled ;
Sin knows no punishment and vice no shame.

I trust in God. Faith has gone out of fashion.
The priest is hounded down, the cross undone.
A Christian is the butt of scornful passion;
Every man claims his rights, his duties none.

I trust in God. Nor fails my fervent prayer,
Though evil-doers boast their triumphs blind !
Let Dante's hell hold circles of despair,
My heart, that enters, leaves not hope behind !

I trust in God. France, sunk in degradation,
Is sick at heart and bears the oppressor's rod ;
But though in deadly sleep lies the Great Nation
The wakening hour will come. I trust in God.

* * *

from Ernest Alfred Vizetelly, *Republican France*, 1912

Boulanger's popularity, and the violent ideas that motivated many of his supporters, made him both too dangerous for the government to ignore, and too powerful for them to get rid of. As tensions mounted toward the end of the 1880s, everybody in France

expected a coup d'état; in the end it was a combination of government pressure and blind, personal chance that prevented yet another empire. But though the immediate threat of Boulangism went away with the General's death, the segment of the population that he represented would reappear on the surface of French society forty years later to support the Nazi-controlled Vichy regime during the Second World War.

When Mme. Boulanger heard that her husband had been wounded she refused to go to him, saying that she was sure he did not want her, but as a matter of duty she would willingly send him her doctor.

She was, no doubt, well aware of his liaison with Mme. de Bonnemains, which appears to have originated in or about 1886, and it has been suggested that her opposition to a divorce, or even an ecclesiastical dissolution of her marriage, was inspired less by any religious feelings than by a determination to prevent her husband from marrying his mistress. As will presently appear there are indications that such was the case. When Mme. Boulanger refused to nurse the General it was his mistress who did so. Marguerite Crouzet — Spouse divorcee de Bonnemains, to employ French legal parlance — was born on December 19, 1855, and was now (1888) in her thirty-third year, her lover Boulanger being fifty-one.

[. . .]

He now found himself much more closely shadowed by detectives than in Floquet's time, and rumours that his actual arrest was intended reached him, finally unnerving him or his mistress to such a point that, either of his own accord or at her solicitation (the point is one which only an answer from the grave could elucidate), he suddenly fled with her to Brussels, where, assuming the name of

Bruno, he put up at the Hotel Mengelle. For several hours his chief acolytes were in dismay. They felt that his flight might ruin everything.

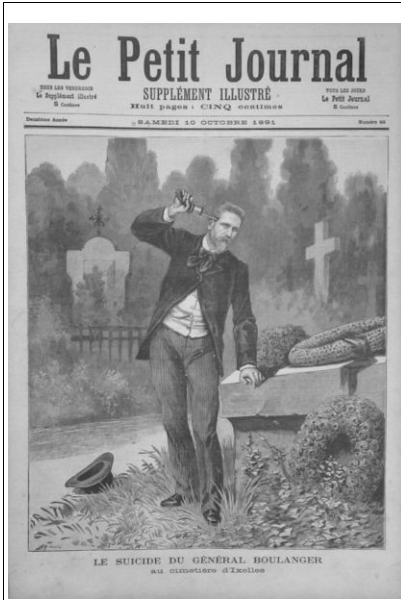
[. . .]

A little later the Senate assembled as a High Court of Justice to adjudicate on the charges against Boulanger and his alleged accomplices, Rochefort and Dillon. The decision was given on August 14, when, by 206 members to 3, Boulanger and Dillon were found guilty of conspiracy, Rochefort being convicted on the same count by 183 to 23. Boulanger alone was convicted of misappropriation of money belonging to the Secret Service Fund. The sentence passed by the court on all three offenders was one of transportation for life to a fortified place, but they were, of course, in perfect safety in London.

[. . .]

The General and Mme. de Bonnemains were still residing at Jersey, but had removed from the Pomme d'Or to a house at St. Brelade. The island's humid climate, was, however, by no means suited to Mme. de Bonnemains. She contracted pulmonary consumption, and then, by slow degrees, this beautiful woman with the statuesque figure, the bust which Rubens might well have chosen as a model, shrank to a skeleton. For some time her lover did not appear to notice it. He himself was ageing rapidly, growing grey, careworn, and bent. The Parisians would have no longer recognised the gallant soldier on the prancing black charger whom they had once applauded so frantically: the dashing captain who was to have restored Alsace-Lorraine to France.

[...]



The Oct. 10, 1891 edition of a popular magazine reports Boulanger's suicide.

Their last days together were somewhat embittered, it has been said, by certain dissensions, provoked by anonymous letters addressed to the General, but his grief was intense when on July 16 his mistress at last passed away. Her fortune was bequeathed to three distant female relatives, who desired, we believe, to take charge of her interment. But the General would not allow it, and she was laid to rest in a vault at the cemetery of Ixelles, near Brussels. He lingered on, greatly afflicted by her loss, until September 30, when, at half-past eleven in the morning, he shot himself dead beside her grave. That afternoon President Carnot gave a great garden party in the grounds of the Elysee Palace, and in the midst of that gay entertainment there came tidings of the death of the man who had been the most dangerous enemy that the Republic had known since its foundation.

Anarchism

from Piotr Kropotkin, *The Place of Anarchism* *in Socialistic Evolution*

In the wake of the suppression of the Paris Commune, the Left was thrown into disarray. While some were lured (at least temporarily) into Boulangism, others took divergent paths in regard to the role of the State. The Communists, led by Marx, continued the main current of French revolutionary thought—influenced largely by Auguste Blanqui—by envisaging the establishment of a universal socialist State, while others who came to be known as Anarchists advocated the rejection of all centralized government in favour of local government from which coercion and hierarchy would be eliminated entirely.

Let us take from the common stock the articles which are abundant, and let those objects whose production is more restricted be served out in allowances according to requirements, giving preference to children and old persons, that is to say, to the weak. And, moreover, let all be consumed, not in public, but at home, according to individual tastes and in company with one's family and friends, this is the ideal of the masses.

But it is not enough to argue about, "Communism" and "Expropriation" it is furthermore necessary to know who should have the management of the common patrimony, and it is especially on this question that different schools of Socialists are opposed to one another, some desiring authoritarian Communism, and others, like ourselves, declaring unreservedly in favour of anarchist Communism. In order to judge between these two, let us return once again to our starting point, the Revolution of last century.

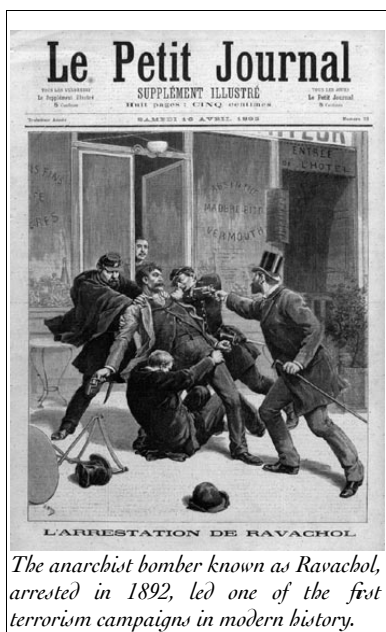
In overturning royalty the Revolution proclaimed the sovereignty of the people; but, by an inconsistency which was very natural at that time, it proclaimed, not a permanent sovereignty, but an intermittent one, to be exercised at certain intervals only, for the nomination of deputies supposed to represent the people. In reality it copied its institutions from the representative government of England. The Revolution was drowned in blood, and, nevertheless, representative government became the watchword of Europe. All Europe, with the exception of Russia, has tried it, under all possible forms, from government based on a property qualification to the direct government of the little Swiss republics. But, strange to say, just in proportion as we have approached nearer to the ideal of a representative government, elected by a perfectly free universal suffrage, in that same proportion have its essential vices become manifest to us, till we have clearly seen that this mode of government is radically defective. Is it not indeed absurd to take a certain number of men from out the mass, and to entrust them with the management of all public affairs, saying to them, "Attend to these matters, we exonerate ourselves from the task by laying it upon you: it is for you to make laws on all manner of subjects armaments and mad dogs,

observatories and chimneys, instruction and street-sweeping: arrange these things as you please and make laws about them, since you are the chosen ones whom the people has voted capable of doing everything!" It appears to me that if a thoughtful and honest man were offered such a post, he would answer somewhat in this fashion:

"You entrust me with a task which I am unable to fulfill. I am unacquainted with most of the questions upon which I shall be called on to legislate. I shall either have to work to some extent in the dark, which will not be to your advantage, or I shall appeal to you and summon meetings in which you will yourselves seek to come to an understanding on the questions at issue, in which case my office will be unnecessary.

If you have formed an opinion and have formulated it, and if you are anxious to come to an understanding with others who have

also formed an opinion on the same subject, then all you need do is to communicate with your neighbors and send a delegate to come to an understanding with other delegates on this specific question; but you will certainly reserve to yourselves the right of taking an ultimate decision; you will not entrust your delegate with the making of laws for you. This is how scientists and business men act each time that they have to come to an agreement."



But the above reply would be a repudiation of the representative system, and nevertheless it is a faithful expression of the idea which is growing everywhere since the vices of representative government have been exposed in all their nakedness. Our age, however, has gone still further, for it has begun to discuss the rights of the State and of Society in relation to the individual; people now ask to what point the interference of the State is necessary in the multitudinous functions of society.

Do we require a government to educate our children? Only let the worker have leisure to instruct himself, and you will see that, through the free initiative of parents and of persons fond of tuition, thousands of educational societies and schools of all kinds will spring up, rivaling one another in the excellence of their teaching. If we were not crushed by taxation and exploited by employers, as we now are, could we not ourselves do much better than is now done for us? The great centres would initiate progress and set the example, and you may be sure that the progress realized would be incomparably superior to what we now attain through our ministries. Is the State even necessary for the defense of a territory? If armed brigands attack a people, is not that same people, armed with good weapons, the surest rampart to oppose to the foreign aggressor? Standing armies are always beaten by invaders, and history teaches that the latter are to be repulsed by a popular rising alone.

[. . .]

Let others, if they will, advocate industrial barracks or the monastery of Authoritarian Communism, we declare that the tendency of society is in an opposite direction. We foresee millions and millions of groups freely constituting themselves for the

satisfaction of all the varied needs of human beings some of these groups organised by quarter, street, and house; others extending hands across the walls of cities, over frontiers and oceans. All of these will be composed of human beings who will combine freely, and after having performed their share of productive labour will meet together, either for the purpose of consumption, or to produce objects of art or luxury, or to advance science in a new direction. This is the tendency of the nineteenth century, and we follow it; we only ask to develop it freely, without any governmental interference. Individual liberty! "Take pebbles," said Fourier, "put them into a box and shake them, and they will arrange them-selves in a mosaic that you could never get by entrusting to anyone the work of arranging them harmoniously."

[. . .]

Let us create circumstances in which man shall not be led to deceive nor exploit others, and then by the very force of things the moral level of humanity will rise to a height hitherto unknown. Men are certainly not to be moralised by teaching them a moral catechism: tribunals and prisons do not diminish vice; they pour it over society in floods. Men are to be moralised only by placing them in a position which shall contribute to develop in them those habits which are social, and to weaken those which are not so. If a morality which has become instinctive is the true morality, the only morality which endures while religions and systems of philosophy pass away. Let us now combine the three preceding elements, and we shall have Anarchy and its place in Socialistic Evolution.

Emancipation of the producer from the yoke of capital; production in common and free consumption of all the products of the common labour.

Emancipation from the governmental yoke; free development of individuals in groups and federations; free organisation ascending from the simple to the complex, according to mutual needs and tendencies.

Emancipation from religious morality; free morality, without compulsion or authority, developing itself from social life and becoming habitual.

The above is no dream of students, it is a conclusion which results from an analysis of the tendencies of modern society: Anarchist Communism is the union of the two fundamental tendencies of our society a tendency towards economic equality, and a tendency towards political liberty. So long as Communism presented itself under an authoritarian form, which necessarily implies government, armed with much greater power than that which it possesses today, inasmuch as it implies economic in addition to political power; so long as this was the case, Communism met with no sufficient response.

* * *

La Ravachole

AIR DE LA Carmagnole ET DU Ça ira

Dans la grand-vil - le de Pa - ris, Dans la grand-vil - le de Pa - ris. Il
 y a des bour-geois bien nour-ri, Il y a des bour-geois bien nour-ri Il y a les mi-sé-reux Qui
 ont le ven-tre creux. Ceux-ci ont les dents lon-gues, Vi-ve le - son, Vi-ve le son, Ceux-
 là ont les dents lon-gues, Vi-ve le son d'ex-plo - sion! Dan - sons la Ra - va - chole, Vive le
 son, Vi-ve le son, Dan - sons la Ra - va - chole, Vi-ve le son d'ex-plo-sion Ah! ça i -
 ra, ça i - ra, ça i - ra, Tous les bour-geois en - vont d'un bom-be! Ah! ça i -
 ra, ça i - ra, ça i - ra, Tous les bour-geois en - vont d'un bom-be! Ah! ça i -

After he was publicly guillotined in 1892, Ravachol became a martyr to the radical Left, and the subject of popular songs. There was another string of bombings in retribution for his execution, including one on the Chamber of Deputies.

from L.S. Bevington, *Anarchism and Violence*, 1896

The anarchist critique of Law, combined with a sense of political helplessness in the fallout of the Commune's destruction, produced an extremist form of anarchism which framed the Revolutionary struggle as a continuous war between the Proletariat and the Bourgeoisie—a war in which the Proletariat, deprived by their enemies of any means of defense, were justified in adapting guerilla tactics, like the 'franc-tireurs' of the Prussian War. The result was a string of bombings and assassinations, in one of the first modern 'terrorist' campaigns. The phenomenon soon spread to Britain and the United States. While there were relatively few actual casualties, those casualties included a U.S. President and other prominent public figures, while the randomness of attacks on high-class hotels, restaurants, and other public spaces caused panic in large cities such as Paris and London. This violent wing was only one of many forms of anarchism; but as we see here, many on the Left understood and empathized with what they saw as acts of desperation, though they condemned the tactics on ethical grounds.

What? bomb-throwing, killings, violence, Useful? What sort of Anarchists are those who say that? Where is their Anarchism, their belief in freedom, and the right of every living man to his own life and liberty? Anarchism is not bomb throwing, violence, incendiarism, destruction. Odd that anything so self-evident should need saying. Odder still that one set of Anarchists should be obliged to turn round in the thick of battle against the common foe to say it to another set. Real Anarchists too, not hybrids, with one eye on freedom and the other on property. Of course the capitalist press has naturally found it convenient to identify Anarchists with bombs, and equally of course, some of our Social Democratic friends have said within themselves, "There, there! So would we have it?" All the same, Anarchism not only is not, but in the nature of the case cannot be, bomb throwing. Anarchism is an abiding body of principles and opinions — a belief with a theory behind it. The throwing of bombs is a mechanical act of warfare, — of rebellion, if you like; — an act likely to be resorted to by any and every sort of "believer" when the whole of his environment stands forearmed against the practical application of his creed. The two cannot anyhow be identical; the question of the hour is— is one of them ever a rational outcome of the other? Can anyone professing this particular "ism" resort to this kind of act, without forfeiting his consistency? Can a real Anarchist — a man whose creed is Anarchism — be at the same time a person who deliberately injures, or tries to injure, persons or property. I, for one, have no hesitation in saying that, if destitute because of monopoly, he can.

I go even further. It seems to me that under certain conditions, (within and without the individual) it is part and parcel,

not of his Anarchism but of his personal whole heartedness as an Anarchist, that he feels it impossible in his own case not to abandon the patiently educational for the actively militant attitude, and to hit out, as intelligently and intelligibly as he can, at that which powerfully flouts his creed and humanity's hope, making it (for all its truth, and for all his integrity) a dead letter within his own living, suffering, pitying, aspiring soul. I may be wrong, but it seems to me that there are now and again conditions under which inaction on the part of Anarchists amounts to virtual partisanship with the "reaction", and this, even though the only kind of effectual activity left open to them be of the directly militant kind.

The extraordinarily rapid spread of our Ideal during the past few years seems to me to have been indirectly but clearly traceable to the quickening effect of the militant but generally intelligible act of a few maddened individuals upon the thousands of minds in all countries which were already unconsciously hungry for the idea, and which found themselves thus compelled to closer reflection and aroused to definite self-recognition as Anarchists.

* * *

Octave Mirbeau, *Ravachol*, 1892

The avant-garde during the Third Republic had no united political position, and friendships and collaborations often crossed party lines. Many dandies, such as Huysmans, were nostalgic for the dying aristocracy, were deeply conservative; many, such as Villiers de l'Isle-Adam, had tried many ideologies and ended up profoundly skeptical of them all; others were outspoken Leftists. The Decadent novelist, dramatist and theorist Octave Mirbeau was among the most ardent proponents of Anarchism in the avant-garde. He treated taboo subject matter such as prostitution, anti-semitism,

and sexual abuse by the Clergy in novels where narrative was broken down, scenes presented out of order, and reality and fantasy blurred—the main characters of his last two novels were his car and his dog. At the same time he was an active journalist and cultural critic. Here he responds to the death sentence of Ravachol, an Anarchist bomber who had attained celebrity among the Left by his articulate explanation of his actions in court.

His head escapes the guillotine!

The jurors who have dared to do this, who covered their ears to the barking clamors of death—were they afraid? Were they afraid to kill a man whose mysterious vengeance won't entirely die with him? Or indeed, beyond the act itself, the awesome horror of which was being howled at them, did they hear the voice of that forward-looking idea, the dominant idea that specifically characterizes this act and ennobles it? I don't know. One never knows what can happen in the conscience of a juror, or what ultimate compulsion he obeys, when dishing out life and death.

The jurors didn't tremble as much as the press that sneered at them, abused them, and damned them. The press wanted blood. Just



The Decadent writer and Anarchist activist Octave Mirbeau

like the crude middle class, whose blind instincts they reflect, and whose threatened privileges they defend, the journalists are afraid. And fear is a savage thing. For to give itself the illusion of a fierce courage, fear likes to apply rouge to its pale features. They believe,

also, that the sound of the legal blade, and the sound of mutilated flesh bouncing on that infamous plank, can drown out the sound of the grinding teeth, the racing pulses, and the voices which grow bolder and angrier every day, boiling up from the hellish underbelly of society. The press is mistaken. There are certain corpses that walk again, and certain voices that won't be stifled. And the void is filled with terrible enigmas.

I am horrified by the bloodshed, the ruins, and the death; I love life, and all life is sacred to me. This is why I'm going to ask for the anarchist ideal which no form of government can create: love, beauty, and peace between men. Ravachol doesn't frighten me. He is as transient as the terror he inspires. He is the thunder clap that is followed by the glory of the sun and the calm sky.

Beyond the somber task at hand smiles the admirable Kropotkin's dream of universal harmony.

Besides, our society has no right to complain, since it has given birth to Ravachol: it sowed misery, and reaped revolution.

This is just.

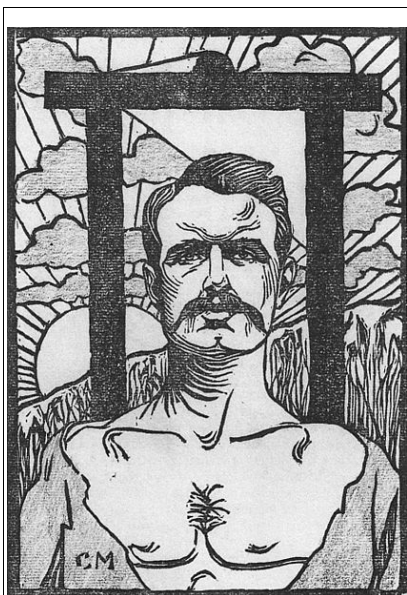
And this begs the question...

Who is it—throughout this endless procession of tortures which has been the history of the human race—who is it that sheds the blood, always the same, relentlessly, without any pause for the sake of mercy? Governments, religions, industries, forced labor camps, all of these are drenched in blood. The murder is weary of their laws, their prayers, and their progress. Again just recently, there were the frenzied butchers who turned Paris into a slaughterhouse as the Commune perished. There were pointless massacres, such as at

Fourmies where the bodies of innocent women and little kids tried out the ballistic virtues of the Lebel's machine gun for the first time. And there are always the mines in which fifty, a hundred, or five hundred poor devils are suffocated, swallowed in a single moment of horrible destruction, their charred bodies never to see daylight again. And there are also the horrid conquests of distant countries where happy races, unknown and peaceful, groan under the boot of that robber of continents, that filthy rapist of forest communities and virgin lands, the western slave trader.

Each footstep taken in this society bristles with privileges, and is marked with a bloodstain; each turn of the government machinery grinds the tumbling, gasping flesh of the poor; and tears are running from everywhere in the impenetrable night of suffering. Facing these endless murders and continuous tortures, what's the meaning of society, this crumbling wall, this collapsing staircase?

We live in ugly times. The misery has never been worse, because it's never been more obvious, and it's never stood closer to the spectacle of wasted riches and the promised land of well-being from which it is relentlessly turned away. Never has the law, which protects only the banks, pressed so hard upon the tortured shoulders of the poor. Capitalism is insatiable, and the wage system compounds the evils of ancient slavery. The shops are packed full of clothing, and there are those who go about completely naked; the indifferent rich are puking up food, while others perish from hunger in their doorways. No cry is heeded: whenever a single, louder complaint penetrates the din of sad murmurs, the Lebel's is loaded and the troops are mobilized.



*As indicated by Charles Maurin's 1894 **Symbolic Ravachol**, the Anarchist bomber became an icon among the Left wing of the Decadent and Symbolist movements, who saw him as a symptom of Capitalism's effect on the working class, just as they saw themselves as symptoms of its effect on the Middle Class.*

And that's not all.

A population does not live solely on its stomach. It also has a life of the mind. Its intellectual joys are just as necessary as its physical joys. It has a right to beauty just as it has a right to bread. Indeed, those who could give it its higher pleasures, those who could introduce to the people this vital beauty are treated like public enemies, hunted down as criminals, hounded for being anarchists and beaten like beggars. They are reduced to a solitary life. An enormous barrier

separates them from the crowd, by whom they are regarded as repulsive spectacles, and over whom there is spread the enormous, sordid, impenetrable veil of triumphant stupidity. We are witnessing an incredible social moment: at this time, while abundant with great thinkers, the public taste has never been so degraded, nor has ignorance ever enjoyed such base pleasures. Surely, if the hour in which we live is hideous, it is formidable as well: it's the hour of popular awakening. And this hour is full of uncertainty. The patience of the downtrodden and the dispossessed has lasted long enough. They want to live, they want to enjoy, they want their share of all the happiness and sunshine. Whatever the rulers do, reacting to their worst fears, they will not forestall the inevitable course of events.

We're touching upon a decisive moment in human history. The old world is collapsing under the weight of its own crimes, and is itself lighting the fuse of the bomb that will blast it all away. This bomb will be all the more terrible because it will contain neither gunpowder nor dynamite. It'll contain compassion and an idea; two forces against which nothing can be done.

* * *

from Sherard, *Twenty Years in Paris*, 1905



Even after losing sight in one eye to an Anarchist bomb, Decadent writer Laurent Tailhade testified in his bombers *defense* in court, and continued his vociferous public polemics in support of the movement.

One of Mirbeau's close comrades was his fellow Anarchist Decadent writer, Laurent Tailhade. Tailhade's literary work discussed opium, venereal disease on the one hand, bourgeois hypocrisy and economic exploitation on the other. At one point he was imprisoned for a year for 'inciting murder' in his essays. He became notorious after voicing public support for the Anarchist Vaillant, who had bombed the Chamber of Deputies. Ironically, several months later an anarchist bomb exploded in the restaurant where he was dining, destroying one eye; more ironically still, suspicion briefly rested on his friend Felix Fénéon, yet another avant-gardist whose apartment had been found to contain a store of dynamite. Despite his

injury, Tailhade took the stand in court in defence of the bomber, and continued to pen anarchist manifestos.

Within the last month one has heard the dreadful catastrophe which has befallen Laurent Tailhade. I knew him well. I never met him elsewhere than in the Latin Quarter. To him belongs the honour of having pronounced a phrase which has become immortal in France, and which will live long after his many writings are forgotten.

It may be remembered that, by the irony of fate, this professing anarchist, whilst dining in luxury at Foyot's Restaurant, was wounded — blinded, indeed, of one eye — by the explosion of a bomb placed on the sill of one of the windows of the café if by an anarchist who did not profess, but who acted. It was after he had recovered consciousness, and while the doctors were bending over his bleeding and mutilated form, that Tailhade said very quietly, "What does the deed matter, provided the gesture be a beautiful one?"

The Dreyfus Affair

from Émile Zola, *I Accuse!*, Jan. 13, 1898

In 1894, Captain Alfred Dreyfus was arrested for passing secret information to the German Embassy, given a short secret trial, stripped of his rank and sent to the French penal colony of Devil's Island. Two years later, information came to light proving that the documents used in his trial had been forged. Unwilling to acknowledge the mistrial, the matter was covered up until 1897 when information was leaked to the press. Émile Zola published an open letter in the Liberal newspaper l'Aurore, accusing the government, and specifically President Félix Faure, of obstructing justice. As he had planned, Zola was charged with libel — making the government obligated to release the pertinent documents regarding Dreyfus as legal evidence and provided a newsworthy platform for supporters of Dreyfus. He was found guilty but fled to England for a year. The political forces arrayed against Dreyfus were primarily Imperialists and militant Catholics, who quickly made anti-Semitism the cornerstone of their campaign. Until Dreyfus was finally acquitted in 1906, his case was the center of heated public debate and the first time that anti-Semitism was challenged on a large scale in Europe. Dreyfus' granddaughter was delivered to the Nazis by the Vichy regime in 1943 and killed at Auschwitz.

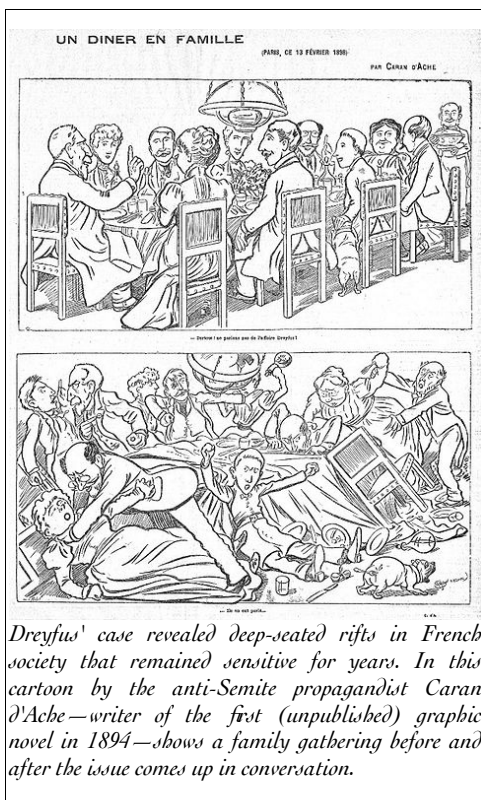
Letter to Mr. Félix Faure, President of the Republic:

Mr. President,

Would you allow me, in my gratitude for the benevolent reception that you gave me one day, to draw the attention of your rightful glory and to tell you that your star, so happy until now, is threatened by the most shameful and most ineffaceable of blemishes?

You have passed healthy and safe through base calumnies; you have conquered hearts. You appear radiant in the apotheosis of this patriotic festival that the Russian alliance was for France, and you prepare to preside over the solemn triumph of our World Fair, which will crown our great century of work, truth and freedom. But what a spot of mud on your name — I was going to say on your reign — is

this abominable Dreyfus affair! A council of war, under order, has just dared to acquit Esterhazy, a great blow to all truth, all justice. And it is finished, France has this stain on her cheek, History will write that it was under your presidency that such a social crime could be committed.



Since they dared, I too will dare. The truth I will say, because I promised to say it, if justice, regularly seized, did not do it, full and whole. My duty is to speak, I do not want to be an accomplice. My nights would be haunted by the specter of innocence that suffer there, through the most dreadful of tortures, for a crime it did not commit.

And it is to you, Mr. President, that I will proclaim it, this truth, with all the force of the revulsion of an honest man. For your honor, I am convinced that you are unaware of it. And with whom will I thus denounce the criminal foundation of these guilty truths, if not with you, the first magistrate of the country?

*
**

First, the truth about the lawsuit and the judgement of Dreyfus.

A nefarious man carried it all out, did everything: Lieutenant Colonel Du Paty de Clam, at that time only a Commandant. He is the entirety of the Dreyfus business; it will be known only when one honest investigation clearly establishes his acts and responsibilities. He seems a most complicated and hazy spirit, haunting romantic intrigues, caught up in serialized stories, stolen papers, anonymous letters, appointments in deserted places, mysterious women who sell condemning evidences at night. It is he who imagined dictating the Dreyfus memo; it is he who dreamed to study it in an entirely hidden way, under ice; it is him whom Commander Forzinetti describes to us as armed with a dark lantern, wanting to approach the sleeping defendant, to flood his face abruptly with light and to thus surprise his crime, in the agitation of being roused. And I need hardly say that

that what one seeks, one will find. I declare simply that Commander Du Paty de Clam, charged to investigate the Dreyfus business as a legal officer, is, in date and in responsibility, the first culprit in the appalling miscarriage of justice committed.

The memo was for some time already in the hands of Colonel Sandherr, director of the office of information, who has since died of general paresis. "Escapes" took place, papers disappeared, as they still do today; the author of the memo was sought, when ahead of time one was made aware, little by little, that this author could be only an officer of the High Comman and an artillery officer: a doubly glaring error, showing with which superficial spirit this affair had been studied, because a reasoned examination shows that it could only be a question of an officer of troops. Thus searching the house, examining writings, it was like a family matter, a traitor to be surprised in the same offices, in order to expel him. And, while I don't want to retell a partly known history here, Commander Paty de Clam enters the scene, as soon as first suspicion falls upon Dreyfus. From this moment, it is he who invented Dreyfus, the affair becomes that affair, made actively to confuse the traitor, to bring him to a full confession. There is the Minister of War, General Mercier, whose intelligence seems poor; there are the head of the High Command, General De Boisdeffre, who appears to have yielded to his clerical passion, and the assistant manager of the High Command, General Gonse, whose conscience could put up with many things. But, at the bottom, there is initially only Commander Du Paty de Clam, who carries them all out, who hypnotizes them, because he deals also with spiritism, with occultism, conversing with spirits. One could not conceive of the experiments to which he subjected unhappy Dreyfus,

the traps into which he wanted to make him fall, the insane investigations, monstrous imaginations, a whole torturing insanity.

Ah! this first affair is a nightmare for those who know its true details! Commander Du Paty de Clam arrests Dreyfus, in secret. He



Captain Alfred Dreyfus

turns to Mrs. Dreyfus, terrorizes her, says to her that, if she speaks, her husband is lost. During this time, the unhappy one tore his flesh, howled his innocence. And the instructions were made thus, as in a 15th century tale, shrouded in mystery, with a savage complication of circumstances, all

based on only one childish charge, this idiotic affair, which was not only a vulgar treason, but was also the most impudent of hoaxes, because the famously delivered secrets were almost all without value. If I insist, it is that the kernel is here, from whence the true crime will later emerge, the terrible denial of justice from which France is sick. I would like to touch with a finger on how this miscarriage of justice could be possible, how it was born from the machinations of Commander Du Paty de Clam, how General Mercier, General De Boisdeffre and General Gonse could be let it happen, to engage little by little their responsibility in this error, that they believed a need, later, to impose like the holy truth, a truth which is not even discussed. At the beginning, there is not this, on their part, this incuriosity and obtuseness. At most, one feels them to yield to an ambiance of religious passions and the prejudices of the physical spirit. They allowed themselves a mistake.

But here Dreyfus is before the council of war. Closed doors are absolutely required. A traitor would have opened the border with the enemy to lead the German emperor to Notre-Dame, without taking measures to maintain narrow silence and mystery. The nation is struck into a stupor, whispering of terrible facts, monstrous treasons which make History indignant; naturally the nation is so inclined. There is no punishment too severe, it will applaud public degradation, it will want the culprit to remain on his rock of infamy, devoured by remorse. Is this then true, the inexpressible things, the dangerous things, capable of plunging Europe into flames, which one must carefully bury behind these closed doors? No! There was behind this, only the romantic and lunatic imaginations of Commander Paty de Clam. All that was done only to hide the most absurd of novella plots. And it suffices, to ensure oneself of this, to study with attention the bill of indictment, read in front of the council of war.

Ah! the nothingness of this bill of indictment! That a man could be condemned for this act, is a wonder of iniquity. I defy decent people to read it, without their hearts leaping in indignation and shouting their revolt, while thinking of the unwarranted suffering, over there, on Devil's Island. Dreyfus knows several languages, crime; one found at his place no compromising papers, crime; he returns sometimes to his country of origin, crime; he is industrious, he wants to know everything, crime; he is unperturbed, crime; he is perturbed, crime. And the naiveté of drafting formal assertions in a vacuum! One spoke to us of fourteen charges: we find only one in the final analysis, that of the memo; and we even learn that the experts did not agree, than one of them, Mr. Gobert, was

coerced militarily, because he did not allow himself to reach a conclusion in the desired direction. One also spoke of twenty-three officers who had come to overpower Dreyfus with their testimonies. We remain unaware of their interrogations, but it is certain that they did not all charge him; and it is to be noticed, moreover, that all belonged to the war offices. It is a family lawsuit, one is there against oneself, and it is necessary to remember this: the High Command wanted the lawsuit, it was judged, and it has just judged it a second time.

Therefore, there remained only the memo, on which the experts had not concurred. It is reported that, in the room of the council, the judges were naturally going to acquit. And consequently, as one includes/understands the despaired obstinacy with which, to justify the judgment, today the existence of a secret part is affirmed, overpowering, the part which cannot be shown, which legitimates all, in front of which we must incline ourselves, the good invisible and unknowable God! I deny it, this part, I deny it with all my strength! A ridiculous part, yes, perhaps the part wherein it is a question of young women, and where a certain D— is spoken of which becomes too demanding: some husband undoubtedly finding that his wife did not pay him dearly enough. But a part interesting the national defense, which one could not produce without war being declared tomorrow, no, no! It is a lie! and it is all the more odious and cynical that they lie with impunity without one being able to convince others of it. They assemble France, they hide behind its legitimate emotion, they close mouths by disturbing hearts, by perverting spirits. I do not know a greater civic crime.

Here then, Mr. President, are the facts which explain how a miscarriage of justice could be made; and the moral evidence, the financial circumstances of Dreyfus, the absence of reason, his continual cry of innocence, completes its demonstration as a victim of the extraordinary imaginations of Commander Du Paty de Clam, of the clerical medium in which it was found, of the hunting for the "dirty Jews", which dishonors our time.

[. . .]

To Paris, the truth inexorably marched, and it is known how the awaited storm burst. Mr. Mathieu Dreyfus denounced Commander Esterhazy as the true author of the memo just as Mr. Scheurer-Kestner demanded a revision of the case to the Minister of Justice. And it is here that commander Esterhazy appears. Testimony shows him initially thrown into a panic, ready for suicide or escape. Then, at a blow, he acted with audacity, astonishing Paris by the violence of his attitude. It is then that help had come to him, he had received an anonymous letter informing him of the work of his enemies, a mysterious lady had come under cover of night to return a stolen evidence against him to the High Command, which would save him. And I cannot help but find Major Paty de Clam here, considering his fertile imagination. His work, Dreyfus's culpability, was in danger, and he surely wanted to defend his work. The retrial was the collapse of such an extravagant novella, so tragic, whose abominable outcome takes place in Devil's Island! This is what he could not allow. Consequently, a duel would take place between Major Picquart and Major Du Paty de Clam, one with face uncovered, the other masked. They will soon both be found before civil justice. In the end, it was always the High Command that

defended itself, that did not want to acknowledge its crime; the abomination grew hour by hour.

One wondered with astonishment who was protecting commander Esterhazy. It was initially, in the shadows, Major Du Paty de Clam who conspired all and conducted all. His hand was betrayed by its absurd means. Then, it was General De Boisdeffre, it was General Gonse, it was General Billot himself, who were obliged to discharge the commander, since they cannot allow recognition of Dreyfus's innocence without the department of war collapsing under public contempt. And the beautiful result of this extraordinary situation is that the honest man there, Major Picquart, who only did his duty, became the victim of ridicule and punishment. O justice, what dreadful despair grips the heart! One might just as well say that he was the forger, that he manufactured the carte-télégramme to convict Esterhazy. But, good God! why? with what aim? give a motive. Is he also paid by the Jews? The joke of the story is that he was in fact an anti-Semite. Yes! we attend this infamous spectacle, of the lost men of debts and crimes upon whom one proclaims innocence, while one attacks honor, a man with a spotless life! When a society does this, it falls into decay.

[. . .]

I have shown in addition: the Dreyfus affair was the affair of the department of war, a High Command officer, denounced by his comrades of the High Command, condemned under the pressure of the heads of the High Command. Once again, it cannot restore his innocence without all the High Command being guilty. Also the offices, by all conceivable means, by press campaigns, by communications, by influences, protected Esterhazy only to convict

Dreyfus a second time. What sweeping changes should the republican government should give to this [Jesuitery], as General Billot himself calls it! Where is the truly strong ministry of wise patriotism that will dare to reforge and to renew all? What of people I know who, faced with the possibility of war, tremble of anguish knowing in what hands lies national defense! And what a nest of base intrigues, gossips and dilapidations has this crowned asylum become, where the fate of fatherland is decided! One trembles in face of the terrible day that there has just thrown the Dreyfus affair, this human sacrifice of an unfortunate, a "dirty Jew"! Ah! all that was agitated insanity there and stupidity, imaginations insane, practices of low police force, manners of inquisition and tyranny, good pleasure of some non-commissioned officers putting their boots on the nation, returning in its throat its cry of truth and justice, under the lying pretext and sacrilege of the reason of State.

And it is a yet another crime to have [pressed on ?] the filthy press, to have let itself defend by all the rabble of Paris, so that the rabble triumphs insolently in defeat of law and simple probity. It is a



Zola's inflammatory open letter appeared on the front page of the Liberal newspaper L'Aurore on Jan. 13, 1898.

crime to have accused those who wished for a noble France, at the head of free and just nations, of troubling her, when one warps oneself the impudent plot to impose the error, in front of the whole world. It is a crime to mislay the opinion, to use for a spiteful work this opinion, perverted to the point of becoming delirious. It is a crime to poison the small and the humble, to exasperate passions of reaction and

intolerance, while taking shelter behind the odious anti-semitism, from which, if not cured, the great liberal France of humans rights will die. It is a crime to exploit patriotism for works of hatred, and it is a crime, finally, to turn into to sabre the modern god, when all the social science is with work for the nearest work of truth and justice.

[...]

I accuse Major Du Paty de Clam as the diabolic workman of the miscarriage of justice, without knowing, I have wanted to believe it, and of then defending his harmful work, for three years, by the guiltiest and most absurd of machinations.

I accuse General Mercier of being an accomplice, if by weakness of spirit, in one of greatest iniquities of the century.

I accuse General Billot of having held in his hands the unquestionable evidence of Dreyfus's innocence and of suppressing it, guilty of this crime that injures humanity and justice, with a political aim and to save the compromised Chief of High Command.

I accuse General De Boisdeffre and General Gonse as accomplices of the same crime, one undoubtedly by clerical passion, the other perhaps by this spirit of body which makes officers of the war an infallible archsaint.

I accuse General De Pellieux and commander Ravary of performing a rogue investigation, by which I mean an investigation of the most monstrous partiality, of which we have, in the report of the second, an imperishable monument of naive audacity.

I accuse the three handwriting experts, sirs Belhomme, Varinard and Couard, of submitting untrue and fraudulent reports,

unless a medical examination declares them to be affected by a disease of sight and judgment.

I accuse the offices of the war of carrying out an abominable press campaign, particularly in the Flash and the Echo of Paris, to mislead the public and cover their fault.

Finally, I accuse the first council of war of violating the law by condemning a defendant with unrevealed evidence, and I accuse the second council of war of covering up this illegality, by order, by committing in his turn the legal crime of knowingly discharging the culprit.

While proclaiming these charges, I am not unaware of subjecting myself to articles 30 and 31 of the press law of July 29, 1881, which punishes the offense of slander. And it is voluntarily that I expose myself.

As for the people I accuse, I do not know them, I never saw them, I have against them neither resentment nor hatred. They are for me only entities, spirits of social evil. And the act I accomplished here is only a revolutionary mean for hastening the explosion of truth and justice.

I have only one passion, that of the light, in the name of humanity which has suffered so and is entitled to happiness. My ignited protest is nothing more than the cry of my heart. That one thus dares to translate for me into court bases and that the investigation takes place at the great day!

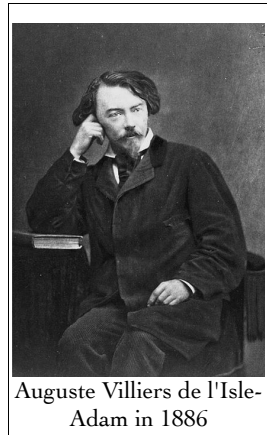
I am waiting.

Please accept, Mr. President, the assurance of my deep respect.

Post-Script

Villiers de l'Isle-Adam, *Vox Populi*, 1880

*Like many in France, the avant-gardist August Villiers de l'Isle-Adam (see Vol. 3) had passed through the full gamut of political positions in the course of the second half of the century, from Communist to Aristocratic, and ended by losing faith in any kind of ideology or change—seeing in the series of regimes and governments only superficial differences that were all equally destructive for the common people of France. His prose poem **Vox Populi** was written some time after the fall of the Commune, which Villiers had enthusiastically supported until he was repelled by its intransigence and the bloodshed that it brought about.*



Grand review at the Champs-Elysees that day !

Twelve years have been suffered since that vision. A summer sun shattered its long arrows of gold against the roofs and domes of the ancient capital. Thousands of panes reflected its dazzling rays; the

people, bathed in a powdery light, thronged the streets to gaze at the army.

Sitting upon a high wooden stool before the railing of the parvis of Notre Dame, his knees folded under black rags, his hands joined under the placard that legally sanctioned his blindness, the centenarian beggar, patriarch of the Misery of Paris a mournful face of ashen tint, with skin furrowed by wrinkles of the color of earth lent his shadowy presence to the *Te Deum* of the surrounding festival.

All these people, were they not his brethren? The joyous passers-by, were they not his kin ? Were they not human, like him ? Besides, that guest of the sovereign portal was not entirely destitute : the State had recognized his right to be blind.

Clothed with the title and respectability implied in the official right to receive alms, enjoying, moreover, a voter's privilege, he was our equal except in light.

And that man, forgotten, as it were, among the living, articulated from time to time a monotonous plaint evident syllabification of the profound sighs of his whole life-time:

" Have pity on the blind, if you please!"

Around him, beneath the powerful vibrations fallen from the belfry outside, yonder, beyond the wall of his eyes the trampling of cavalry, the intermittent braying of trumpets, acclamations mingled with salvoes of artillery from the Invalides with the proud shouts of command, the rattle of steel, and the thunder of drums scanning the interminable march of the passing infantry, a rumor of glory reached him ! His trained hearing caught even the rustle of the floating standards whose heavy fringes brushed against the cuirasses. In the

mind of the old captive of obscurity a thousand flashes of sensation evoked visions foreknown yet indistinct. A sort of divination informed him of what fevered the hearts and thoughts of the city.

And the people, fascinated, as always, by the prestige that comes from strokes of boldness and fortune, clamored its prayer of the moment :

" Long live the Emperor !"

But during the lulls of the triumphal tempest a lost voice arose in the direction of the mystic railing. The old man, his neck thrown back against the pillory of bars, rolling his dead eyeballs towards the sky, forgotten by that people of which he seemed alone to express the genuine prayer, the prayer hidden under the hurrahs, the secret and personal prayer, droned, like an augural interceder, his now mysterious phrase :

" Have pity on the blind, if you please !"

Grand review at the Champs-Elysees that day !

Now ten years have flown since the sun of that festival same sounds, same voices, same smoke. A sordine, however, tempered the tumult of the public rejoicings. A shadow weighed on the eyes of all. The ceremonial salvoes from the platform of the Prytaneum were crossed this time by the distant growls of the batteries in our forts ; and straining their ears, the people sought already to distinguish in the echoes the answer of the enemy's approaching cannon.

The Governor, borne by the ambling trot of his thoroughbred, passed, smiling upon all. The people, reassured by the

confidence which an irreproachable demeanor always inspires, alternated with patriotic songs the military applause with which they honored the presence of the soldier.

But the syllables of the furious cheer of yore had been modified ; the distracted people preferred the prayer of the moment :

" Long live the Republic !"

And yonder, in the direction of the sublime threshold, could still be distinguished the solitary voice of Lazarus. The sayer of the hidden thought of the people did not modify the rigidity of his fixed plaint. Sincere soul of the festival, uplifting his extinguished eyes to the sky, he cried out, during the silences, with the accent of one making a statement :

" Have pity on the blind, if you please !"

Grand review at the Champs-Elysees that day !

Now nine months have been endured since that troubled sun. Oh ! same rumors, same clashing of arms, same neighing of horses, more muffled, however, than the previous year, but yet noisy.

" Long live the Commune !" shouted the
people to the passing wind.

And the voice of the secular Elect of Misfortune still repeated, yonder upon the sacred threshold, his refrain that connected the unique thought of the people. Raising his trembling head to the sky, he moaned in the shadow :

" Have pity on the blind, if you please !"

And two moons later, when, to the last vibrations of the tocsin, the generalissimo of the regular forces of the State reviewed his two hundred thousand guns, still smoking, alas ! from the sad civil war, the terrified people shouted, while gazing upon the edifices flaming afar :

" Long live the Marshal !"

Yonder, in the direction of the pure enclosure, the immutable voice of the veteran of human misery mechanically repeated his dolorous and piteous observation :

" Have pity on the blind, if you please !"

And since then, from year to year, from review to review, from vociferations to vociferations, whatever might be the name thrown to the hazards of space by the cheering people, those who listen attentively to the sounds of the earth have always distinguished, above the revolutionary clamors and the warlike festivals that followed, the far-away Voice, the true Voice, the intimate Voice of the terrible symbolical beggar, of the incorruptible sentinel of the citizens' conscience, of him who restores integrally the occult prayer of the Crowd and expresses its sighs.

Inflexible Pontiff of fraternity, that authorized titulary of physical blindness, has never ceased, like an unconscious mediator, to invoke the divine charity upon his brethren in intelligence.

And when, intoxicated with fanfares, with peals of bells and with artillery, the people, dazed by the flattering uproar,

endeavors vainly, under whatever syllables falsely enthusiastic, to hide from itself its veritable prayer, the beggar, groping through the sky, his arms uplifted, his face towards the heavy darkness, arises on the eternal threshold of the church, and seem, however, to carry beyond the stars, in tones more and more lamentable, which continues to cry his prophetic rectification :

" Have pity on the blind, if you please !"

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